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ABSTRACT

In 1989, the Minnesota Office of Educational Leadership (OEL) was directed to develop a plan for a 2-year research project to determine the effectiveness of a learner outcome-based system of education in improving pupil learning. Ten research and development project sites comprising 17 districts and 5 educational consortia received grants of $100,000 each to implement processes designed to transform schools into new structures that assure all students of success with learning systems. Volume 1 of this two-volume document describes the research design and data collection processes used to analyze the project sites' progress. Findings resulting from group and one-on-one interviews, spot observations, records, and student assignment analysis relate to changes occurring in family demographics, student populations, communities, and school districts as well as preclinical response to educational change, the status of OEL clinical workshop outcomes, and factors affecting the project. Recommendations include clarifying project priorities and using the research process to facilitate project goals. Four appendices to this volume describe the methods and data collection processes, context of the study, quantitative results, and survey inventories. Volume 2 contains individual case study reports of 39 project and learning sites funded by OEL during 1989-91. (EJS)

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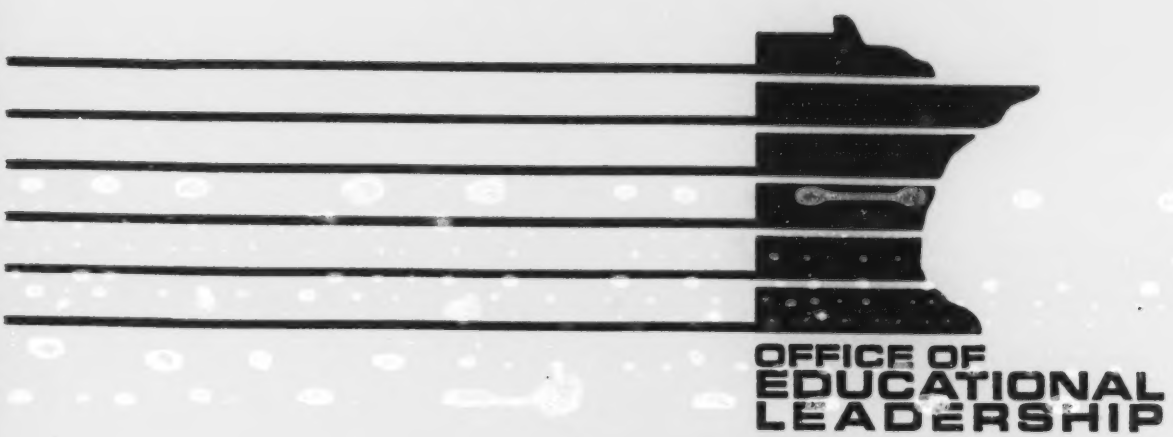
Office of Educational Leadership

Interim Legislative Report

January, 1991



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Office of Educational Leadership

Volume I: Phase I Evaluation Report

Submitted by:

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January, 1991

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3

The Design of the Evaluation 10

Background of the Study 11
Overview of the OEL Research and Development Project 11
Implementing the Research and Development Project 13
The Collaborative Planning Process 13

Research Methodology 14

Project Findings 16

Changes Occurring Across Project Sites 17
Changes Occurring in Family Demographics 17
Changes Occurring in Student Populations 18
Changes Occurring in Communities 18
Changes Occurring Across School Systems 19
Changes Occurring Within School Systems 20

Pre-Clinical Response to Educational Transformation 21
Lack of Understanding 21
Disagreement with OBE and the Goals of OEL R&D Program 22
Competing Priorities 23
State Level Approach and Support for Long-Term Change 23

Status of OEL Outcomes 24

Factors Affecting Success 30
Strong Conceptual Support for Educational Transformation 30
Support of the Office of Educational Leadership 30
Ambiguity and Obscurity of the "Intervention" 30
Competing Priorities 31
State Approach to Change 31
State Commitment to Long-Term Change 31

Recommendations 32

Appendices:

Appendix A: Methods and Data Collection Processes
Appendix B: Context of the Study
Appendix C: Quantitative Results
Appendix D: Survey Inventories

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

In 1988, the Minnesota legislature created the Legislative Task Force on Education Organization. The Task Force began their work with the creation of a vision of education for the 21st century. From that initial work they examined the issue of learning opportunities for Minnesota students, the requisite organizational changes to support those opportunities, and the funding processes to support the emerging system. This work supported an existing environment for change within the legislature and resulted in the creation of the Office of Educational Leadership (OEL) in July, 1989. The broad legislative charge to the Office was to create a foundation from which the education system in Minnesota could be transformed to better meet the needs of students and society into the 21st century. The OEL was directed in the enabling legislation to develop a plan for a two-year research project to determine the effectiveness of a learner outcome-based system of education in improving pupil's learning.

The legislation required:

- educational goals to be attained;
- varied options for achieving the goals;
- a hierarchy of learner outcomes;
- networks for communicating the progress and the results of the research;
- an objective process for evaluating the progress and results of the research to be performed by an independent evaluator;
- multiple assessment strategies for evaluating pupils' progress at the classroom level; and
- methods of assessing pupils' thinking and problem-solving skills.

The Research and Development (R&D) Project was initiated to develop and examine the effect of processes designed to transform schools into new structures that assure that all students experience success with learning systems. During the first two years of the R&D Program, activities have been developed which will establish the foundation of a new infrastructure to support success for all learners. These research activities will identify policies and practices at the site, district, regional, and state levels which support or hinder the transformation of Minnesota education. The transformation process requires the movement to new paradigms (a set of assumptions about how the world works, which produce a congruent and tightly interconnected system of policies and practices in an organization) which allow the creation of new assumptions about how the world of education works.

In September, 1989, ten R&D project sites, comprising 17 districts and 5 educational consortiums, were selected to receive grants of $100,000 from the State Department of Education. The project is now in its second year of operation.

In January, 1990, the OEL released a formal Request for Proposals to potential and interested research contractors. The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota submitted a proposal and the OEL formally accepted a revised version of the CAREI proposal in March, 1990. This report, *Volume I: Phase I Evaluation Report* presents the research and evaluation results generated from the study; *Volume II: Case Studies* contains 39 individual case study reports.

Project Findings

- The ten project sites included in this study can be roughly categorized into three groups: greater Minnesota, suburban, and urban. However, each individual learning site represents its own set of constituents and faces different problems with different priorities.

Changes Occurring in Family Demographics

- Schools universally reported that the number of traditional families in their districts has continually decreased in recent years. Likewise, the number of single parent families and families with both adult caregivers working has continually increased. These changes have affected schools in two fundamental ways. First, parents in these families generally have less time for outside interests including school activities, and second, adults' off-work time is often more focused on family-related matters, e.g., managing household responsibilities and spending time with their children.

Changes Occurring in Student Populations

- More children are spending substantial amounts of time at daycare or latchkey programs (more dominant in affluent communities) or being left alone/unsupervised at home before and after school (more dominant in less affluent communities). As a result, many schools are dealing with enormous pressures to provide social services and special help, e.g., special education, nutritional and emotional support, to students from these families in order to ensure their ability to concentrate on school as well as to attend to their safety and well being.

- Many teachers and school staff members reported that their job roles and responsibilities have continually expanded from teaching students subject matter in the classroom to dealing with students' personal issues and problems outside of the classroom. A number of teachers indicated that they feel that there is not enough time during the school day any longer to properly do their primary job--teach students.

Changes Occurring in Communities

- Many school personnel perceive there to be less respect for education and teachers within communities than there has been in the past.

- A number of project sites conveyed reports of how important bond issues have been voted down in their communities, often when teachers' salaries were up for negotiation. Many less affluent greater Minnesota schools have had to confront issues and problems related to declining tax bases and declining school enrollments. As a result, it appears increasingly difficult for greater Minnesota communities to support educational change, especially when the change might increase taxes.

- A number of project sites have had to adjust to changing social trends and/or different groups within their communities. For communities that were at one time extremely homogeneous, adjusting to and accepting cultural diversity has been difficult. For

example, aging greater Minnesota communities have had to deal with the exodus of their young people to urban areas or with the immigration of different ethnic groups. On the other hand, larger urban communities have had to deal with changing ethnic ratios and integration.

Changes Occurring Across School Systems

- The majority of schools have aging teacher populations. While part of this may be attributed to constant cutbacks in educational funds throughout the past decade, some individuals reported that the small number of younger teachers was related to the reduced status and financial rewards of teaching among younger people.

- Teachers throughout the school systems are willing to try educational transformation if it will directly improve the quality of student education. If education transformation, including outcome based education, is to be successful, it will be important for teachers and principals to buy into the program on the basis that it will ultimately help students.

Changes Occurring Within School Systems

- Schools have continually acquired more responsibility for providing social and emotional services to students with special needs. As a result, teaching now often requires a teacher to wear multiple hats. For many teachers, the transition and expansion of the traditional teaching role have been both frustrating and discouraging. A number of teachers indicated that their roles have changed so much over the years that they actually spend less time teaching students than they do trying to manage needy students and to cope with constant change.

Pre-Clinical Response to Educational Change

- Many educators indicated that they are excited about educational transformation and the transformation-related changes occurring in their districts. Generally speaking, the more informed individuals were of educational transformation and outcome based education, the more positive and excited they tended to be about the R&D project. Likewise, the less informed individuals were of educational transformation and outcome based education, the less positive and excited they tended to be about the project.

- While many schools and school personnel are knowledgeable and well-informed about the OEL R&D project, OBE, and changes occurring in their schools, others have little knowledge or awareness of the changes. It is also evident that many school personnel are confused and also disagree as to the extent of change targeted by the project.

- Some individuals indicated that they are skeptical of educational transformation in general and question whether learner outcome systems will really help students to pass tests and learn. A number of these individuals simply do not agree with the goals of educational transformation as they understand them. A second group reported that trying to build a "failure-free" school system is an unrealistic goal and that some students are always going to fail regardless of the school program in use.

- The strongest and largest source of resistance to educational transformation and the project is related to the state's perceived approach to and support for long-term change. First, school personnel were often critical of and sensitive to "another top-down state program" being forced upon them. For example, school personnel reported that it's not educational transformation that they dislike per se, but more the manner in which they perceived it being implemented. Second, a number of schools and school personnel questioned the state's long-term commitment to educational transformation and its continuation of the project beyond the next year. Schools and school personnel are hesitant to get deeply involved in another project or program that may be terminated with short notice. Likewise, they indicated that they have gotten frustrated with how the state can and has "changed the rules" on them in the past.

Status of the OEL Clinical Workshop Outcomes

- A recent survey across sites indicates that most of the sites have plans for implementing the OEL clinical workshop outcomes in place and that they are at varying degrees of implementation. The results of the survey also indicate that there is general support across sites for OBE, educational transformation, and the OEL R&D project.

Factors Affecting the Project

- A factor which has positively affected the OEL R&D project is the strong conceptual support that educators and community leaders throughout the state have for educational transformation. A number of individuals have taken on educational transformation as a "personal cause" within project sites.

- A second factor which has positively affected the R&D project is the leadership and support of the OEL. Despite its brief existence, the OEL has integrated and synthesized considerable knowledge of innovative and transformed educational systems. In addition, the OEL has played a primary role in facilitating the research process.

- A first factor which limited the success of the OEL R&D project is related to the basic lack of understanding that many school personnel and community leaders have of OBE, educational transformation, and the OEL R&D project. These basic concepts remain unclear to scholars and practitioners alike, and there is considerable disagreement and confusion as to how to operationalize them.

- A second factor which has limited the success of the R&D project relates to competing priorities that many of the project sites are dealing with. While the main priority of smaller financially trouble schools revolved around issues of survival, there is still a considerable amount of confusion among the many programs operating in stable schools.

- A third factor which has limited the success of the project is schools' perceptions of the state's role in the project. The project is perceived by many school personnel to be a top-down project and grant driven by OEL, a section of the State Department of Education.

- An additional factor which has limited the success of the R&D project is related to the state's long-term commitment to educational transformation and continuation of the project beyond the next year. Many school personnel are hesitant to get deeply involved in projects or programs that may be terminated. The recent election has exacerbated apprehension.

Recommendations

Given the issues and problem areas identified in the study, the following general recommendations are suggested:

- **Clarify the concepts of OBE, educational transformation, and the OEL R&D project.** It is evident from the results of the study that many school personnel are confused and unable to distinguish among these three concepts. The OEL should assume responsibility for communicating the meaning and scope of each of these three concepts to school personnel through the teacher level by: 1) continuing to use the clinical workshops and institutes as a means to explore OBE, educational transformation, and the OEL R&D Project on a conceptual level; 2) setting up a system or forum for project sites to network and share "success" stories; 3) initiating collaborative problem-solving among project sites; 4) continuing the present progression of action research in project sites; and 5) communicating regularly through the OEL Network (representatives from each project site).

- **Clarify project priorities.** A factor which has limited the success of the OEL R&D Project is related to the competing priorities that many of the project sites are dealing with. While educational transformation is perceived by many, on the administrative level, to be an exciting new direction in educational improvement, many in the school systems see it as yet another program to implement or as something else to be added to their already heavy workloads. In addition, the state plan was developed after the ten R&D project sites had been selected. Consequently, most of the project sites had to revise their original plans for educational change in order to accommodate the State Plan. This remains a source of irritation for a number of the project sites. While being sensitive to competing priorities, the OEL should, first of all, examine and select priorities and then communicate those priorities to the project sites. Likewise, OEL should assist the project sites in developing a process through which change can be initiated and managed.

- **Manage the top-down mandate into a bottom-up process.** The strongest and largest source of resistance is related to the state approach to and support for long-term change. School personnel reported that educational transformation is a good idea, but not if it is forced on them. Likewise, a number of school personnel reported that they resented being told to do something that in their minds they were already doing. Other school personnel indicated that they resented having what they perceived to be conditions placed on their grant monies, e.g., having to use grant money to attend clinical workshops. Second, most school systems and school personnel questioned the state's long-term commitment to educational transformation and its continuation of the project beyond the next year; people are hesitant to commit to a change process that may end with short notice. Third, the OEL is organizationally and physically housed

within the Minnesota Department of Education. As a result, many project sites and educators distrust the OEL because they perceive it to be a extension of the "state."

It is crucial that OEL alter the "another top-down state program" perception that exists in school systems throughout the state and continue to develop a collegial management style sensitive to school systems' competing priorities. Likewise, it is imperative that educators, especially teachers and principals, understand and support OBE, educational transformation, and the OEL R&D Project on conceptual and operational levels if any of the three is to be successfully integrated into Minnesota educational systems.

- **Use the research process to facilitate the goals of the project.** The results of the study convincingly demonstrate the potential of educational transformation and the OEL R&D project. While continuing to use the OEL Network to share information and results, the project should switch now from a baseline data mode into a formative evaluation mode, addressing some of the specific issues at the site level.

The Design of the Study

Background of the Study

Understanding the magnitude of this project requires an understanding of the legislative intent behind the project as well as the history of the project. In 1988, the Minnesota legislature created the Legislative Task Force on Education Organization. The Task Force began their work with the creation of a vision of education for the 21st century. From that initial work they examined the issue of learning opportunities for Minnesota students, the requisite organizational changes to support those opportunities, and the funding processes to support the emerging system. This work supported an existing environment for change within the legislature and resulted in the creation of the Office of Educational Leadership (OEL) in July, 1989. The broad legislative charge to the Office was to create a foundation from which the education system in Minnesota could be transformed to better meet the needs of students and society into the 21st century. The OEL was directed in the enabling legislation to develop a plan for a two-year research project to determine the effectiveness of a learner outcome-based system of education in improving pupil's learning.

The legislation required:

- educational goals to be attained;
- varied options for achieving the goals;
- a hierarchy of learner outcomes;
- networks for communicating the progress and the results of the research;
- an objective process for evaluating the progress and results of the research to be performed by an independent evaluator;
- multiple assessment strategies for evaluating pupils' progress at the classroom level; and
- methods of assessing pupils' thinking and problem-solving skills.

Overview of the OEL Research and Development Project

The Research and Development Project (R&D) was initiated to develop and examine the effect of processes designed to transform schools into new structures that assure that all students experience success with learning systems. During the first two years of the R&D Project, activities have been developed which will establish the foundation of a new infrastructure to support success for all learners. These research activities will identify policies and practices at the site, district, regional, and state levels which support or hinder the transformation of Minnesota education. The transformation process requires the movement to new paradigms (a set of assumptions about how the world works, which produce a congruent and tightly inter-

connected system of policies and practices in an organization) which allow the creation of new assumptions about how the world of education works.

In September 1989, ten R&D project sites, comprising 17 districts and 5 educational consortiums (see Table 1), were selected to receive grants of $100,000 from the State Department of Education.

Table 1 - R&D Project Sites 1989-91

1. **Cambridge-Isanti Ind. Dist. #911** and **Princeton, Ind. Dist. #477**: A consortium of two K-12 districts.
2. **Cass Lake-Bena, Ind. Dist. #115**: A single K-12 district.
3. **Columbia Heights, Ind. Dist. #13**; **Fridley, Ind. Dist. #14**; **Spring Lake Park, Ind. Dist. #16**; and **St. Anthony-New Brighton, Ind. Dist. #282**: A consortium of four K-12 districts.
4. **Elk River, Ind. Dist. #728**: A single K-12 district.
5. **Halstad, Ind. Dist. #524** and **Hendrum-Perley Ind. Dist. #525**: A consortium of two K-12 districts.
6. **Hopkins, Ind. Dist. #270**: A single K-12 district.
7. **Minneapolis, Special District #1**: Chiron and High Five Projects.
8. **St. Paul, Ind. Dist. #625**: Saturn School.
9. **South Central Education District**: An Education District comprised of 13 LEA's.
10. **Winona, Ind. Dist. #861**: A single K-12 district.

To implement this process of transformation, the OEL has identified six implementation phases which are hypothesized to effect the requisite changes. They include:

- Transformation of learning sites: exploration and leadership;
- Transformation of central offices: exploration and leadership;
- Technical assistance;
- Networking;
- Leadership development at a conceptual level; and
- Partnerships.

In the vision of the OEL, the process of transforming learning sites and central offices requires a two step process. The first is the creation of opportunities for staff to explore outcomes which describe the new paradigms in clinical settings. The second is the creation of leadership training for persons in leadership positions to support the implementation of the outcomes describing the new paradigms. Technical assistance to sites, staff of central offices, college and university staff and others becomes an essential component of the successful transformation of education. The creation of networks which represent the varied publics provide opportunities to share expertise, information, and research results across the varied sites and groups. The conceptualization of leadership skills which are or will be needed by individuals who are implementing the transformation is a critical research component. The creation of side-by-side partnership in which all involved parties benefit from the relationship is another critical component of the implementation of an ongoing transformation process.

The State Plan outlined two specific methodologies for conducting the research: qualitative case studies as the baseline from which change in the above factors will be determined; and action research to determine site needs.

Implementing the Research and Development Project

In January, 1990, the Office of Educational Leadership released a formal Request for Proposals to potential and interested contractors. The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) submitted a proposal that outlined the following purposes for conducting the research:

- to document readiness/capacity of district/school culture to deal with change, what changes have been made or are being made, how changes are taking place, and how those changes affect learning,
- to set up a system for collecting baseline and longitudinal data, and
- to draw general conclusions regarding things that seem to have a positive impact on educational change, a negative impact on educational change, and no impact on educational change.

CAREI's proposal was built on the notion of long-term research collaboration that is central to its mission. Rather than developing activities for the spring research independently of OEL and the R&D project site personnel, CAREI proposed instead a collaborative process that would engage OEL staff, project site R&D participants, and university researchers collectively in generating a joint research agenda. A two-day planning session was proposed that would:

- foster a rapport among people who would participate in the research,
- create two research agendas--one for issues across sites, and one that would include project- and learning-site specific issues, and
- develop appropriate methods for data collection.

Following that meeting, the CAREI research team would then formalize the research design, create the necessary instruments, collect data at approximately 35 learning sites around the state, and prepare case study reports. The OEL formally accepted a revised version of the CAREI proposal in March, 1990. In addition to obtaining commitments from four university professors, CAREI hired 11 part-time research assistants and three qualitative research/evaluation consultants to implement the research activities.

The Collaborative Planning Process

A collaborative planning meeting was scheduled for April 3rd and 4th, 1990, for the OEL staff, project site R&D participants, and CAREI staff. The meeting was facilitated by Michael Quinn Patton, a professor at the University of Minnesota who is well-known for his work in evaluation and qualitative methods. The majority of the collaborative process was spent developing and negotiating the scope and methods to be included in the research plan.

Alternating between small- and large-group work until consensus was reached, the scope of the final research plan included:

- demographic data,
- building site culture,
- district and community context,

- status on outcomes listed by the state, and
- additional site-specific documentation.

The group also developed a number of principles to guide the research process. They included:

- the research process should be respectful of the uniqueness of learning sites,
- it should be supportive of learning without being a burden to learning sites,
- it should be sensitive to and inclusive of multiple levels, stakeholders, and diverse community participants,
- it should use multiple and "people-sensitive" methods, and
- the results should be *useful* within and across learning sites.

Based on these principles, the group decided to use the following data collection methods to collect information: focus group interviews; semi-structured one-on-one interviews; writing or drawing assignments for students; observation; and records/materials analysis. It is especially important to note that the research plan which evolved collaboratively during the two-day meeting in April focused on baseline data questions and hence differed significantly from the two-year focus given in the OEL's RFP. Study of three out of the four major components of the R&D process were deferred to the second year.

At the end of the meeting, most participants reported that they had felt genuinely engaged by the process and that the final "product" seemed reasonable. Although no pervasive concerns emerged, several participants did express the following concerns: resentment at and frustration with the short time-line (lateness in the school year) and hurriedness of everything for the remainder of the year; frustration with limited resources given the scope of the endeavor; concern that the research process and product were insufficiently focused on learners; the need to translate the experiences for those who hadn't been there to get their buy-in into the goals and objectives of the research project; and a sense, in one small group experience, that university researchers had dominated the process and not listened well.

By the 15th of April, 1990, CAREI staff had finished developing the research design and management schedules. On April 17, 1990, letters of introduction and detailed plans outlining the scope and activities of the research process were mailed to each of the ten R&D project sites. Before any of the CAREI researchers began their work at the project sites, CAREI consultants made phone calls to each of the project sites in order to verify that they had indeed received the materials from CAREI and that each project site fully understood and was comfortable with the scope of the work and activities to be conducted.

Research Methodology

Overall, this study used a case study approach which combined a variety of qualitative data collection methods to gather the information needed. This type of approach was information-sensitive enough to document readiness/capacity of district/school culture to deal with change, what things/changes/events had been made or were being made, how changes were taking place, and how those changes affect learning. Implementing the study involved the development and administration of a number of basic data collection formats: focus group interviews; semi-structured one-on-one interviews; writing or drawing assignments for students; observation; and records/materials analysis.

Focus group interviews were targeted for the following groups: project leadership teams, school board members, community groups actively involved in the project, parents (involved and less involved), teachers, and union representatives (when appropriate). Learning sites were asked to arrange and schedule groups with diverse opinions about change. In addition, semi-structured one-on-one **interviews** were targeted for building site principals, faculty opinion leaders, and union representatives (when appropriate).

Spot observations were conducted of learning activities, both in and out of the classroom to look at current learning attitudes, learner self-concepts, and learning designs in action. Researchers randomly selected a sample of classes and visited them at random times. Spot observations were also used to gather information related to affective behaviors and language of the site. Learning sites were asked to arrange access to classrooms for researchers, to inform teachers that the observations were going to occur, and to assure teachers that the observations were not evaluative, but to document current norms for future comparisons.

It was decided that it would be most efficient to ask the districts and learning sites to collect documents locally. More specifically, learning sites were asked to provide a variety of demographic and archival data, e.g., population, economic information, types of special needs services available, and number of teachers and administrators employed. On the district level, project sites were also asked to provide documents and information related to goals for the district, organizational charts, grants within the past three years, and existing outcome statements. OEL-related materials and documents were reviewed/analyzed (**records analysis**) for trends, patterns, problems, and related issues and then placed in data archives at CAREI.

Finally, **writing or drawing assignments** were collected from students at a number of sites. Learning sites were asked to help researchers select teachers and classrooms and to emphasize to students that these assignments were part of a research project, that their input would be used, and that their opinions would make a difference. Some of the topics that the writing or drawing assignments focused on included "my most fantastic day in school," "best, worst, and probable futures," and "description of this site for a newcomer." Detailed information related to the methods involved in the data collection processes can be viewed in Appendix A.

A number of factors affected the implementation of the R&D project. The constraints and/or limitations of this study are related to the nature and sheer size of the project itself, the complexity of the "intervention" studied, the newness of conducting research collaboratively, time constraints, and the scope of the original research design. The context of the study is outlined in greater detail in Appendix B.

Project Findings

The research and evaluation data will be presented as answers to the major questions posed earlier. The following questions are divided into a series of subtopics which provide a framework for presenting the findings:

- What changes are occurring across project sites?
- What has been the pre-clinical response to educational transformation?
- What is the status of the OEL clinical workshop outcomes?
- What factors have affected the OEL R&D project?

It is generally agreed that our present systems of education have become outdated and incapable of producing success for our nation's youth. But in order to initiate the process of educational transformation, we first need to understand the context for change.

Changes Occurring Across Project Sites

Overall, the project sites were given full autonomy to implement their programs in ways that fit with their strengths and their preferred repertoire of approaches to creating learning situations. In general, the schools included in this study can be categorized into three groups: greater Minnesota, suburban, and urban. However, each individual learning site represents its own set of constituents and faces different problems with different priorities.

The findings reported in the following sections are based on information collected from school personnel, students, and community members across the project sites. Their comments, both written and verbal, were reviewed and content analyzed in order to identify the topics addressed in the study. Content and comments from meetings have also been included when appropriate. The following narrative summarizes the most common themes reflected in their comments.

Changes Occurring in Family Demographics

During the process of the study, a number of overall trends and patterns related to family demographics became apparent across project sites. First, schools universally reported that the number of traditional families (households with two adult caregivers in which one adult, usually the female, stays at home during the day to take care of domestic duties) in their districts has continually decreased in recent years. Likewise, the number of single parent families and families with both adult caregivers working has continually increased.

These changes have affected schools in two fundamental ways. First, parents in these types of families generally have less time for outside interests, e.g., volunteering for and attending

school-related activities; and second, adults' off-work time is often more focused on family-related matters, e.g., managing household responsibilities and spending time with their children. Because single parent families and two-income families often have multiple and sometimes conflicting roles and responsibilities to manage, school and school-related activities have become priorities that are difficult or even impossible to address.

Changes Occurring In Student Populations

As a result of these changing family demographics, more children are spending substantial amounts of time at daycare or latchkey programs (more dominant in affluent communities) or being left alone/unsupervised at home before and after school (more dominant in less affluent communities). Many school personnel reported that they perceive this change in family structure to be directly related to increased numbers of students needing additional special services in their schools.

As a result, many schools are dealing with enormous pressures to provide social services and special help (e.g., special education, nutritional and emotional support) to students in order to ensure their ability to concentrate on school as well as to attend to their safety and well being. There is a sense in a number of schools that there are not enough services for the students who need them and that, as a result of limited resources, some kids are *falling through the cracks*. In the words of one teacher,

> *"Some students have a serious agenda for survival, and they're here because of the caring."*

Consequently, many teachers and many school staff members reported that their job roles and responsibilities have continually expanded from teaching students subject matter in the classroom to dealing with students' personal issues and problems outside of the classroom. A number of teachers indicated that they feel that there is not enough time during the school day any longer to properly do their primary job--teach students.

Changes Occurring in Communities

During the study, it became apparent that many school personnel perceive within communities there to be less respect for education and teachers than there has been in the past. A number of project sites conveyed reports of how important bond issues have been voted down in their communities, particularly when teachers' salaries were up for negotiation. As a result of this association, community respect and support for teachers within the educational system appears to have declined. Some typical comments include:

> *"This place is not secure for teachers, but is secure for kids."*
>
> *"Parents expect teachers to be accountable to them."*
>
> *"[Parents say] I can't do anything with my Kid, but you can fix him. But don't bother me or get me involved or inconvenience me in any way as your helping that child achieve, make them love it and don't contact me."*

Communities have also been concerned about getting bond issues passed to build new school facilities, especially where school buildings are older or not well suited for implementing innovative teaching methods. Bond issues have been the most difficult to get passed in less affluent greater Minnesota communities which have larger percentages of older adults living on fixed incomes who have no children attending school. A number of school personnel reported that because older members of the community were convinced that the school system had been *good enough for them*, it ought to be good enough for the students going there now. As a result, it has been increasingly difficult for aging greater Minnesota communities to support educational change, especially when the change might increase taxes. In the words of one community member,

> *"It is the people who don't have children that are the ones who have power to vote when it comes to passing referendums."*

It was also evident during the course of the study that a number of communities have had to adjust to changing social trends and/or different groups within their communities. For a number of communities that were at one time very homogeneous, adjusting to and accepting cultural diversity has been difficult. For example, aging greater Minnesota communities have had to deal with the exodus of their young people to urban areas or with the immigration of different ethnic groups. On the other hand, larger urban communities have had to deal with changing ethnic ratios and integration. As one parent noted, *I see the problem as more than between the haves and have nots. People may have the same problems, but complicated by color. Our district is desegregated, but not integrated.* Other comments include:

> *"School is becoming a social service organization in a broader sense as a socialization process for raising kids."*

> *"OBE is not going to do a thing unless children are put first. This is the first generation of Americans not willing to sacrifice for their kids."*

Changes Occurring Across School Systems

A number of changes have also occurred across school systems. Many less affluent greater Minnesota schools have had to confront issues and problems related to declining tax bases and declining school enrollments. For those communities which have been able to keep their small schools going, many have continually had to deal with severe financial constraints which have not only limited their access to resources, but also limited the educational options they are able to provide. Losing a school through consolidation dramatically impacts community morale because it's perceived to be an indication of the town's decline or failure. As a result, communities generally choose to consolidate their school(s) with another community only as a last resort. For communities and school systems facing these kinds of problems, any additional change, such as OBE or educational transformation, only strains the system further. In the words of one community member,

> *"The school is the hub of the community. It brings people together for school events. It concerns me that if we don't have quality education here, we won't have a school here. And if you don't have a school, you basically don't have a community anymore."*

It also became apparent during the study that the majority of schools have aging teacher populations. While part of this can be attributed to constant cutbacks in educational funds throughout the past decade, a number of individuals reported that the small numbers of younger teachers was related to the perceived status and financial rewards of teaching among younger people. At any rate, older teachers have already been through all of the educational changes instituted during the 1960's and 1970's and may be more resistant to the changes required by OBE.

On a more positive note, the results of the study indicate that teachers throughout the school systems are willing to try educational transformation if it will directly improve the quality of student education. However, if education transformation, including outcome based education, is to be successful, it will be important for teachers and principals to buy into the program on the basis that it will ultimately help students.

Changes Occurring Within School Systems

There have also been a number of changes which have occurred within project sites themselves. Throughout the years, schools have continually acquired more responsibility for providing social and emotional services to students with special needs. As a result, teaching now requires a teacher to wear multiple hats. For many teachers, the transition and expansion of the traditional teaching role have been both frustrating and discouraging. A number of teachers indicated that their roles have changed so much over the years that they actually spend less time teaching students than they do trying to manage needy students and to cope with constant change. In the words of a principal,

> *"Teaching is better than it has ever been . . . but social services haven't caught up with the needs."*

In addition, while the workloads and responsibilities of teachers have increased significantly over the years, salary increases and other rewards have not been commensurate. In recent years, site-based management has prompted many school districts to develop participative decision-making processes on the local level. This type of management style requires all members to be involved in a decision and requires a group to reach some sort of a consensus on an issue before moving onto the next one. However, there are several assumptions that must be met in order for this management style to be effective. First, group members need to have an equal shared value and level of power when contributing to decisions. This is a dramatically different role for teachers who have, in the past, learned how to adjust their teaching to the current autocratic administrative figure at the school. In the words of one teacher, *We are trained professionals, but not prepared for site-based management and shared decision making.* While a great many teachers indicated that they appreciated the chance to provide their input into decisions, many also reported that the system was cumbersome and time consuming. In addition, there also appeared to be confusion in a number of schools about who ought to be making particular decisions and how those decisions ought to be made.

Second, group members need to be equally committed to and regularly attending meetings in order for a participative decision-making process to remain efficient. For school staff, especially teachers, who are already struggling with overwhelming workloads, attending an additional meeting becomes an added burden. It was evident during the course of the study that the morale of teachers is strongly affected by the approach, attitude, and abilities of the

principal in the building. In short, many of the school personnel involved in the study were struggling just to survive and adjust to changing professional roles in the classroom, overwhelming and increasing workloads, and limited time frames in which to concentrate on the business of teaching. As one teacher reported,

> *"Over the years, more pressure is being put on the classroom teacher, requirement to do more, in the same amount of time that we've always had, we have to teach computers, we have to squeeze that in, then the counselor comes with [his]/her things, a special program, and you have to squeeze that in."*

Pre-Clinical Response to Educational Transformation

The results of the study indicate that school districts have responded to change in a variety of ways. Several schools indicated that they are excited about educational transformation and the transformation-related changes occurring in their districts. Generally speaking, the more informed individuals were of educational transformation and outcome based education, the more positive and excited they tended to be about the project. Likewise, the less informed individuals were of educational transformation and outcome based education, the less positive and excited they tended to be about the project. As one teacher put it,

> *"I am excited about moving on. I think we have some really strong possibilities here. I think if anything, we're too anxious. It's going to take time . . ."*

However, the majority of project sites are confused about the state's expectations of them. A number of schools believe they were already developing transformation-related programs before the OEL project started and they perceive the state as trying to "catch up" to what has been going on in the field. In addition, there is a fair amount of resistance in the schools towards implementing what a number of individuals in the project sites perceive the OEL goals to be. Their varied reasons for resisting are discussed in the following sections.

Lack of Understanding

While many schools and school personnel were knowledgeable and well-informed regarding the OEL project, OBE, and changes occurring in their schools, others had little knowledge or awareness of the changes occurring in education. Others reported that they had attended OBE-related workshops and seminars associated with the project but were still confused about the goals of OBE, educational transformation, and the OEL project. This group often made references to workshops and seminars being too theoretical for them and were concerned that they had not been told how to implement OBE or the project's goals. It was also evident from discussions with school personnel that they are confused and also disagree as to the extent of change targeted by the project. Some typical comments include:

> *"In the past two or three years, more teachers have been asking about and going to workshops. There is very definitely more collaboration between teachers . . . We need more of these kinds of opportunities."*

> *"Almost the entire staff went to [a workshop held in another city]. I'll be perfectly honest, I think they are ahead of many teachers in bigger schools."*

"The only problem I see with it [OBE] is the logistics of it. How to manage it. I can't find anyone who can tell me how it works. It may be additional work for teachers. But we have always been willing to do more work than necessary."

"I would say right now, there are only a few teachers who know very much about OBE. For the most part, I think the rest of the faculty is waiting to see how things go.

"I think there are still a few teachers who have questions about how to implement it. Where are the time and money are going to come from? Where will clerical time come from?"

While a fear of failure was never mentioned directly by school personnel, it was clear that a number of teachers are apprehensive about being judged by their success with a new program as complex as OEL.

Disagreement with OBE and the Goals of OEL R&D Program

One finding which regularly emerged during the study was a difference in ideology and/or philosophy among the state, school systems, and school personnel involved in the project. Some individuals indicated that they are skeptical of educational transformation in general and questioned whether learner outcome systems will really help students to pass tests and learn. A number of these individuals simply do not agree with the goals of educational transformation as they understand them. Some typical comments include:

"Good teachers don't need OBE."

"I basically feel that all good teachers have always had outcomes in mind."

"OBE's weakness is that it doesn't look at the emotional needs of the students as we move into the 90's."

"There are always going to be parents who are very conservative. Parents will be upset that we are experimenting with their kids. That students are not being graded the same way. There have been few complaints so far, but I anticipate that there will be more. I am also anxious how the other teachers will receive this [OBE] approach."

"We believe in change if it will help our kids and we are confident in the teachers, but why does it have to be OBE?"

A second group reported that trying to build a "failure-free" school system was an unrealistic goal and that some students are always going to fail regardless of the school program in use. A number of parents reported that failure is a part of the real world and that cushioning students from that experience will have a negative impact on them. A third group indicated that they were suspicious of the state's accountability goals and questioned state motives.

"I still think there some kids that are never going to make it."

"You still need failure. There cannot be success without failure."

Competing Priorities

A third source of school resistance is related to differences in priorities. It was evident during the process of the study that many of the schools were already dealing with a lot of change, e.g., increased numbers of special needs students, and greater Minnesota pairing/sharing, consolidation, before the OEL project started. Consequently, a number of school personnel reported that the last thing they need now is more change to complicate matters. In addition, other schools, especially greater Minnesota schools, have been struggling to survive the deep budget cuts, decreasing tax bases, and cooperation efforts they've been confronted with. Some typical comments include:

"We are overwhelmed, we want some stability, and we don't like change."

"We are all numb."

"Nobody asked me, and they should have."

"They are giving us so much stuff all at once that you can't keep up."

State Level Approach and Support for Long-Term Change

The strongest and largest source of resistance to educational transformation and the project is related to the state's perceived approach to and support for long-term change. First, school personnel were often critical of and sensitive to "another top-down state program" being forced upon them. For example, school personnel reported that it's not educational transformation that they dislike per se, but more the manner in which they perceived it being implemented. In a culture that is in many ways powerless, i.e., dependent upon state and local funding patterns and interest, community voting patterns and interest, many school personnel reported that they resent being told what to do and the state's control over their schools. Other school personnel indicated that they disliked being told to do something that in their minds they were already doing. Some typical comments include:

"The schools got ahead of the state. Therefore, they are training us in what we already know."

"It should not come from the top down."

Second, a number of schools and school personnel questioned the state's long-term commitment to educational transformation and its continuation of the project beyond the next year. It was apparent during the study that schools and school personnel are hesitant to get deeply involved in another project or program that may be terminated with short notice. Likewise, they indicated that they have gotten frustrated with how the state can and has "changed the rules" on them in the past. In addition, schools and school personnel identified the importance of having adequate resources (time, money, and equipment) for educational transformation or any other program to be truly successful. Some typical comments include:

"It should not be 'change for change sake' or 'a passing fad' or 'the latest trend.'"

"I think most are just taking a wait and see attitude."

Status of OEL Outcomes

Between the months of January and March, 1990, the formal OEL clinical workshop outcomes were developed (a set of 22 transformational outcomes which has since been revised down to 17 outcomes) to guide OEL activities in the project sites statewide. Because the original scope of this study did not include evaluation and because the learning site transformations were to be worked out at the local level involving different starting points as well as various approaches, the original study was not designed to examine the OEL clinical workshop outcomes. However, research strategies were designed to be sensitive to what was happening at each site as it undertook the transformation process and to look at status related to the spirit of transformation included in the OEL clinical workshop outcomes. The initial descriptive status report of the project sites developed during summer 1990 on the OEL clinical workshop outcomes was presented to OEL staff and the OEL Network (representatives from each site) in September, 1990. During the September meeting, the OEL staff and Network decided to pursue the status of the OEL clinical workshop outcomes in greater detail in an second phase of research.

A second phase of research involved the design, construction, and administration of two survey instruments. Several factors, including the large numbers of anticipated respondents, the amount and type of information sought, and the anticipated coding needs for data analysis led to a decision to use mostly close-ended items.

First, CAREI researchers and OEL staff drafted a pool of items considered most relevant to the OEL clinical workshop outcomes. The items were then piloted with Network members in order to determine clarity and gain reaction to each item. Based on feedback received, certain items were revised to improve item flow, certain items were re-worded to eliminate ambiguities, and items considered irrelevant were deleted. The final form of the survey process included two versions, Form 1 and Form 2, and used a checklist format which asked respondents to check one or more of the response alternatives provided. In addition, a number of open-ended questions were used to ask respondents to clarify their responses to certain questions (see Appendix C).

Administration

The surveys were distributed to the Network member at each project site who was then asked to distribute surveys to the following individuals within their sites:

- individuals who participated in one of the summer clinicals at Columbia Heights or Mankato,
- principals of learning sites,
- selected project site administrators, e.g., superintendent(s) of the district or districts involved, and two or three licensed central office administrators such as head of curriculum and instruction, etc., and
- approximately six teachers per learning site who had not attended a clinical.

Of the 485 surveys distributed, 326 were returned for a response rate of 67 percent. Overall, 53 percent of the respondents were from the five Greater Minnesota project sites, 38 percent were from the three suburban project sites, and 9 percent were from the two urban project sites.

Demographics of Respondents

In general, 65 percent of respondents indicated that they were teachers and 22 percent administrators. While three-quarters (78 percent) of respondents reported that they had been employed in K-12 education for 11 or more years, over half of the respondents (53 percent) indicated that they have been in their current position for over five years. Respondent demographics are summarized in greater detail in Appendix D.

As a part of the survey, respondents were asked whether they had participated in any OEL activities/events. Overall, 168 respondents (52 percent) indicated that they had attended at least one OEL activity/event. Their involvement in OEL activities/events is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 - Summary of Participation in OEL Activities/Events

Activity/Event	Percent Involved
Columbia Heights Clinical/Experience at Saturn (June, 1990)	32
Interview/Focus Group with Researcher on Site (May-June, 1990)	30
Project Site Network Meetings	28
Developing Leadership Education Cadre	27
Mankato Clinical (August)	25
Other	21
Managing Change: Brainerd	18
Collaborative Research Design Meeting (April, 1990)	14
Research Design Meeting (September)	7

Respondents were also asked how many separate professional growth activities they attend or are involved in each year. While only 14 percent indicated that they attend two or less activities each year, almost half of respondents (46 percent) indicated that they attend or are involved in six or more activities each year. When asked to identify the best professional growth activity they've participated in the past two years, respondents reported that subject-related courses (24 percent), the OEL clinical workshops (23 percent), college courses (19 percent), personal experience (5 percent), and various other unspecified workshops (29 percent) have been the most helpful.

Results of the Survey

One section of the survey was designed to determine the status/progress to date of a number of OEL clinical workshop outcomes. For each target outcome, respondents were first asked to indicate whether their school/learning site has developed or has in place a plan/strategy for addressing the outcome, and second, to indicate the extent to which that plan/strategy has been developed and/or implemented. Overall, their responses indicate that many project sites have developed specific plans related to multiple assessments, professional growth activities, and in defining district expectations. On the other hand, they indicated that project sites have the fewest plans developed regarding reporting systems appropriate for outcome-based learning and multi-age communities of learners. The same pattern holds true for stage of implementation. Their responses in this section of the survey are summarized in Table 3.

In a second section of the survey, respondents were asked to rate, again using a seven-point scale, whether all students can learn core outcomes, whether their school/learning site can be structured to make this possible, how strongly staff at their school/learning site support a common vision for the school, and the extent to which their school/learning site's present vision influences planning for the school in the context of the 17 OEL clinical workshop

Table 3 - Summary of Plans Developed and Stage of Implementation

OEL Outcome	Percent Reporting Plan in Place	Stage of Planning*
Professional growth embedded into team activities and learning site activities	72	3.8
Multiple assessments for assessing student progress, program decisions, and accountability	64	3.2
Outcomes aligned with state graduation outcomes	63	3.6
District expectations defined for site level	61	3.7
Teaching teams comprising diverse backgrounds, styles, and curricular strengths	56	3.4
Coordinated services among agencies serving high risk youth and their families	55	3.7
Integrated curriculum	55	3.0
Advisor/advisee program for program planning, student input into curriculum, home contact/ communication, and personal growth	51	3.9
Programs coordinated across levels and among pre-K, K-12, and post-secondary education agencies	50	3.4
Special area/low enrollment (e.g., art, physics) teachers included in teams and represented on site council	49	3.5
Strategy for independent, self-directed student learning	49	3.1
Partnerships to expand learning opportunities on- and off-site	42	3.0
Report system appropriate for outcome-based learning program using multiple assessments without grade level structure	36	2.5
Multi-aged "communities of learners" in which an individual student stays with a team of teachers for at least three years	31	2.8

* Means based on ratings from 7-point scale: 1 = Planning Stage Only; 7 = Plan Fully Implemented

outcomes. Overall, respondents indicated quite strongly that they believe all students in their school/learning site can learn core outcomes (mean=5.8). Of the 83 individuals who provided additional explanations to this question, one-third of respondents indicated that all students can learn core outcomes given the right circumstances and an additional one-third reported, that with the exception of some special needs students, most students can learn core outcomes. Other respondents referred to the link between student learning and the positive attitudes of current teachers. Some typical comments include:

"At different rates, but they can all learn!"

"The OEL outcomes support the learner as opposed to the outcome."

"Given enough time, all students can succeed."

"Using OBE, all students are guaranteed success."

"To believe that all students can learn is upbeat, but there are many variables, e.g., absenteeism, that you can not control."

"I feel there are a few exceptions because of attitude and intelligence."

"'All' is too absolute. There is that 1 percent to 20 percent that is going to have great difficulty."

"Social/economic factors prevent students from succeeding. Education must be self-generated. We haven't got control of their whole lives."

"All students can benefit but I'm questioning how to bring all students to the level of achieving all of the outcomes if the proficiency required is only 80 percent."

The results of the survey also reveal that respondents are somewhat less confident that their school/learning site can be structured so that all students can learn core outcomes (mean=5.2). Of the 95 individuals who provided additional comments to this question, 59 percent referred to problems and barriers hindering success in this area. More specifically, 27 percent reported that their school/learning site does not have adequate resources, e.g., time and money, or that they face negative attitudes and resistance from certain groups (14 percent), or that the physical layout of their school/building site hinders transformation (7 percent). On the positive side, while 31 percent indicated that the positive attitudes of people working together will make it possible, 11 percent reported positive leadership in their community makes restructuring and transformation possible. Some typical comments include:

"I feel this could be done if there was enough manpower and a lower student-to-teacher ratio."

"There needs to be the willingness and commitment from the school board/administration to spend the money needed."

"Our staff/administration, parents and school board are working together."

"We have a strong administration that will get the job done."

"We need more teachers or smaller classrooms."

"Very difficult to have all students learn core outcomes if they are not on the same level with other members."

"There are not sufficient resources to plan or deliver 'reteaching' units."

While most respondents reported that their school/learning site's present vision influences the short- and long-range planning for their school (mean=5.2), fewer respondents indicated that the staff at their school supports a common vision (mean=4.7). While 18 percent of the 85 respondents who provided additional comments to these questions indicated that all aspects of planning at their school/learning site are guided by a common vision or that their school leadership is moving towards a common vision (6 percent), 25 percent reported that their school/learning site has no vision which guides planning and/or decision-making. In addition, 20 percent reported that they are unaware of efforts in their school/learning site to develop a common vision; 5 percent indicated that their school/learning site had other priorities, e.g., consolidation and restructuring. Some of their comments include:

"All planning is directed toward OBE and its implementation."

"I think our leadership is trying to get some immediate results as well as plan for the future."

"We haven't had the opportunities as a faculty to do much planning."

"It can happen, but it's not likely with no district plan--no common vision statement."

"We have no vision statement being done."

As a part of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate whether their school/learning site developed personalized programs for individual students. The 145 individuals who responded to this question were balanced between "yes" (43 percent) and "no" (42 percent); a number of respondents (15 percent) placed their mark in between the yes/no response options. While 13 percent of the 106 respondents who provided additional explanations reported that all students at their school/learning site have personalized learning plans, 17 percent indicated that some grades (mostly on the elementary level) have personalized learning plans and 23 percent indicated that some courses (mostly on junior high and high school level) have personalized learning plans. An additional 30 percent reported that they are currently in the process of developing personalized programs, or that they are doing specific things, e.g., retesting (2 percent) and peer tutoring (13 percent), related to developing personalized learning plans. Some typical comments include:

"Each of the students in K-2 has an LP in place."

"A number [of schools/learning sites] have some grades in place and are moving on."

In a third section of the survey, individuals were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions related to several of the OEL clinical workshop outcomes. One question asked respondents to describe activities at their school/learning site related to team processes (e.g., communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and planning) and site centered decision-making regarding curriculum, budgeting, and personnel. Of the 107 respondents who provided comments to the question, 51 percent reported that faculty are currently involved in decision-making within their schools/learning sites and 34 percent indicated that faculty are involved in curriculum-related decision-making. Other respondents reported site-centered team planning activities (47 percent) and various other types of meetings (13 percent). An additional group of individuals indicated that their team processes and site centered decision-making related to identifying and working towards the OEL clinical workshop outcomes (26 percent). Some typical comments include:

> *"Very little going on–we've had a district meeting in which OBE was explained with a question and answer session–some discussion on how to train our own teachers locally, but no teams have been established yet."*

> *"Teachers stay in contact with each other on ways to reteach, retest, enrichments, etc., to try to reach all students."*

A second question asked respondents to describe how parents and community leaders are involved at their school/learning site. Of the 108 individuals who responded to this question, the majority (69 percent) indicated that parent and community members at their school/learning site are involved in non-decision-making types of activities, e.g., volunteer activities (50 percent), school visits (9 percent), and parent/teacher conferences (11 percent). While 36 percent of respondents indicated that parents and community leaders are involved in advisory committees (50 percent), district planning meetings (4 percent), and open meetings (7 percent), an additional group (19 percent) reported parents and community leaders have few to no options for involvement at their school/learning site.

A third question asked respondents to identify the opportunities for leadership development available at their school/learning site. Twelve percent of the 106 individuals who responded to this question indicated that they have few to no options for leadership development and others reported that they have access to a variety of workshops (59 percent). An additional 58 percent of respondents (38 percent) indicated that they have various types of in-school opportunities, e.g., faculty committees, available to them.

As a follow-up to the preceding question, respondents were also asked how individuals were selected for participation in leadership activities at their school/learning site. Of the 109 individuals who provided comments to this question, the majority (63 percent) indicated that individuals volunteered for activities or that administrators selected individuals for involvement (15 percent). Other respondents reported that individuals are selected by faculty committees for involvement in leadership development activities (9 percent), or that everyone participates at their site (8 percent), or that their school/learning site encourages individuals to volunteer for activities (5 percent).

Factors Affecting the R&D Project

Strong Conceptual Support for Educational Transformation

A factor which has positively affected the success of the OEL R&D project is related to the strong conceptual support that educators and community leaders throughout the state have for educational transformation. First, the excitement and strong competition for the OEL grants of $100,000 indicate that there is a substantial amount of interest in educational transformation throughout the state. To date, there has been a considerable amount of work and progress generated from those monies. Second, it was evident during the study that a number of individuals have taken on educational transformation as a "personal cause" within their project sites. Many of these individuals have taken on extra workloads in developing/integrating curriculum materials and/or in promoting the transformation process to the community at large. Third, the success of the project is related to teachers themselves. It was evident from the results of the study that teachers throughout school systems are willing to try new ideas which they perceive will directly improve the quality of student education. In the words of two teachers:

> *"I am excited about moving on. I think we have some really strong possibilities here."*

> *"I feel we have to progress. If we are truly interested in the best education for children, we will pursue it."*

Support of the Office of Educational Leadership

A second factor which has positively affected the success of educational transformation is directly related to the leadership and support of the OEL. Despite its brief existence, the OEL has successfully integrated and synthesized a considerable body of knowledge regarding innovative and transformed educational systems based on the results of research. In addition to being responsive to the feedback that it has received throughout the R&D Program, e.g., building the summer clinicals and seminars, the OEL has played a primary role in facilitating the research process.

Ambiguity and Obscurity of the "Intervention"

A factor which has limited the success of the OEL R&D project is related to the basic lack of understanding that many school personnel and community individuals have of OBE, educational transformation, and the OEL R&D project. More specifically, their concerns revolve around: *What is it? How do teachers do it? What does it look like when done successfully? How will teachers know when they are doing it well?* Similarly, project sites were also confused and disagreed as to the extent of change targeted by the OEL R&D project.

Lack of understanding is also related to a number of individual's perceived disagreement with the goals of the OEL R&D project. While one group indicated that they are skeptical about OBE and educational transformation really helping students to pass tests and learn, another group reported that trying to build a "failure-free" school system is unrealistic. Other individuals indicated that they are suspicious of the state's accountability goals.

These basic concepts remain unclear to scholars and practitioners alike, and even with a definition, there is considerable disagreement and confusion as to how to operationalize them. To date, OBE and educational transformation remain as elusive as the mirage of an oasis in the desert--you can see it from a distance but can't get close enough to find out what it really is.

Competing Priorities

A second factor which has limited the success of the OEL R&D project is related to the competing priorities that many of the project sites are dealing with. While educational transformation is perceived by many, often on the administrative level, to be an exciting new direction in educational improvement, it is perceived by many in the school systems as yet another program (e.g., MEEP, PER, AOM, Chapter I, NCA, local initiatives, etc.) to implement or as something else to be added to their already heavy workloads. While the main priority of smaller financially troubled schools revolved around issues of survival, there was still a considerable amount of confusion among the many programs operating in stable schools. A predominate feeling among teachers throughout all of the school systems is that there is just not enough time during the school day to properly do their primary job--teach students.

State Approach to Change

A third factor which has limited the success of the project is related to schools' perceptions of the state's role in the project. Overall, the project is perceived by many school personnel to be a top-down project, i.e., OBE has been mandated by the legislature and the project is grant driven by OEL, a section of the State Department of Education. While implementing the OEL project in school systems was designed/intended to be a collaborative process between districts and the state, many schools perceive the state to have had its own agenda at times. School personnel were often critical of and sensitive to "another top-down state program" being forced upon them. For example, school personnel reported that it's not educational transformation that they dislike per se, but more the manner in which they perceived it being implemented. Many school personnel reported that they do not like being told what to do and the state's intervention in their school's plans. In addition, a number of school personnel said they resented the assumption that they were not already doing this.

State Commitment to Long-Term Change

An additional factor which limited the success of the project revolves around the state's long-term commitment to educational transformation and the continuation of the project beyond the next year. At this point, many school personnel are hesitant to get deeply involved in projects or programs that may be terminated with short notice. The recent election has exacerbated apprehension and frustration. Likewise, they indicated that they have gotten frustrated with how the state can and has "changed the rules" on them in the past. In addition, schools and school personnel identified the importance of having adequate resources (time, money, and equipment) in order for educational transformation to be truly successful.

Recommendations

Given the issues and problem areas identified in the study, the following general recommendations are suggested:

- **Clarify the concepts of OBE, educational transformation, and the OEL R&D Project.** It is evident from the results of the study that many school personnel are confused and unable to distinguish among these three concepts. The OEL should assume responsibility for communicating the meaning and scope of each of these three concepts to school personnel through the teacher level by: 1) continuing to use the clinical workshops and institutes as a means to explore OBE, educational transformation, and the OEL R&D Project on a conceptual level; 2) setting up a system or forum for project sites to network with and share "success" stories; 3) initiating collaborative problem-solving among project sites; 4) continuing the present progression of action research in project sites; and 5) communicating regularly through the OEL Network.

- **Clarify project priorities.** A factor which has limited the success of the OEL R&D Project is related to the competing priorities that many of the project sites are dealing with. While educational transformation is perceived by many, on the administrative level, to be an exciting new direction in educational improvement, many in the school systems see it as yet another program to implement or as something else to be added to their already heavy workloads. In addition, the state plan was developed after the ten R&D project sites had been selected. Consequently, most of the project sites had to revise their original plans for educational change in order to accommodate the State Plan. This remains a source of irritation for a number of the project sites. While being sensitive to competing priorities, the OEL should, first of all, examine and select priorities and then communicate those priorities to the project sites. Likewise, OEL should assist the project sites in developing a process through which change can be initiated and managed.

- **Manage the top-down mandate into a bottom-up process.** The strongest and largest source of resistance is related to the state approach to and support for long-term change. First, school personnel reported that it's not educational transformation that they dislike per se, but more the manner in which they perceive it being implemented. Likewise, a number of school personnel reported that they resented being told to do something that in their minds they were already doing. Other school personnel indicated that they resented having what they perceived to be conditions placed on their grant monies, e.g., having to use grant money to attend clinical workshops. Second, most school systems and school personnel questioned the state's long-term commitment to educational transformation and its continuation of the project beyond the next year; both are hesitant to get deeply involved in another project or program that may be terminated with short notice. Third, the OEL is organizationally and physically housed within the Minnesota Department of Education. As a result, many project sites and educators distrust the OEL because they perceive it to be a extension of the "state."

  It is crucial that OEL alter the "another top-down state program" perception that exists in school systems throughout the state and continue to develop a collegial management

style sensitive to school systems' competing priorities. Likewise, it is imperative that educators, especially teachers and principals, understand and support OBE, educational transformation, and the OEL R&D Project on conceptual and operational levels if any of the three is to be successfully integrated into Minnesota educational systems.

- **Use the research process to facilitate the goals of the project.** The results of the study convincingly demonstrate the potential of educational transformation and the OEL R&D project. While continuing to use the OEL Network to share information and results, the project should switch now from a baseline data mode into a formative evaluation mode, addressing some of the specific issues at the site level.

Appendix A: Methods and Data Collection Processes

Research Plan for Site Culture Documentation

I. **Demographic Data & Documents**--Collected by districts and sites

II. **Building Site Culture--14 hours**

A. Ideals, values, norms, roles, attitudes toward change, of students/staff
   a. Focus group--with a small, representative group of teachers.
   b. Spot observations--documenting normal activity; not evaluative.
   c. Individual interviews--with principal and faculty opinion leaders.
   d. Student writing/drawings--some teachers will be asked to assist.

B. Learning site climate, affective atmosphere, and morale
   a. A published, student climate survey--it takes about 20 minutes.
   b. Analysis of language--examining language for affective content.
   c. Observation of climate--behavior, language, site appearance.
   d. Informal questioning of learners--about general learning climate.

C. Decision making and leadership
   a. Questions on leadership in focus groups--for teachers, leadership, board, parents, community, union representatives.
   b. Questions in interviews--for principal and opinion leaders.

D. Staff development
   a. Information taken from documents--at local and district levels.
   b. Questions--for teachers, leadership, principal, union representatives.

III/IV. **District and Community Values, Norms, and Change Issues Affecting Learning Sites--7 hours**
   a. Focus group--with leadership on OEL project, other initiatives.
   b. Focus group discussion--with board members of varying opinions.
   c. Focus group discussion--with community group actively involved.
   d. Interview or focus group--with individual or group from union.
   e. Focus group discussion--with active and less involved parents.

V. **Status on 21 Potential Outcomes Listed by State**

Research design will be sensitive to the spirit of the 21 outcomes. Concepts and principles behind them guide observations, topics for interviews and focus groups, and data analysis and reporting.

VI. **Additional Documentation--Remaining 2 to 3 hours**

Researcher will schedule additional focus groups with learners, observation at meetings or staff development activities, etc.

Plan is based on directives developed at the April 3, 4 planning meeting attended by representatives of all districts and learning sites in OEL Research & Development Project. A more complete version of the plan is available for anyone who is interested. Additional study of learners, methods, and issues will be designed for next year.

05/01/90

Research Plan for Current Site Culture Documentation

This research design is based directly on the directives developed at the April 3, 4 planning meeting attended by representatives of all districts and learning sites in the OEL Research and Development Project.

I. **Demographic Data and Documents**--It was decided that it would be most efficient to ask the Districts and Learning Sites to collect documents locally. See attached sheet for those requested at this time. The field worker will arrange to meet with your designated person to pick these up; *NO research time.*

II. **Building Site Culture--14 hours per school/building/local learning site**

A. DOCUMENTATION OF

1. Learners' ideals, values, norms, roles
2. Staff ideals, values, norms, roles
3. Attitudes toward change, barriers to and enhances of change, "we-they" feelings

METHODS:

a. Focus groups--The researcher will sit and talk with a small group of teachers from a single learning site (building). The discussion will be tape recorded. Learning sites will be asked to arrange a group of teachers with diverse opinions about change for a one hour discussion at mutual convenience of researcher and faculty involved; *1 hour*

b. Spot observations--of learning activities in or out of classrooms to look at current learning attitudes, learner self-concepts, and learning designs in action. Researcher will select a sample of types of classes and visit at random times to document routine activity. Learning sites will be asked to arrange access to classrooms for the researcher, to inform teachers that observation will occur, and to assure teachers that the observations are not evaluative, but seek to document current norms for future comparisons; *3 hours, stratified sample, 9 classrooms.*

c. Individual interviews--with building site principal and five opinion leaders from the faculty, approximately one hour each. Learning sites will be asked to help the field worker arrange for these and to help select a balance of varying opinions about changes needed; *1 hour each, total 6 hours.*

d. Writing or drawing assignments for students--CAREI team will design assignments. Learning sites will be asked to help researcher select classrooms, ask selected teachers to include these assignments in their plans, and to emphasize to students that these assignments are part of an important research project, that their input will be used and that their opinions will make a difference. Researcher can meet with teachers to discuss aims to be achieved or visit student groups briefly to explain the procedures. (Possible focal topics include "my most fantastic day in school," "best, worst, and probable futures", "description of this site for a newcomer.") *1 hour talking with people to arrange and help people see aims.*

[NOTES: 1) Video-taping classrooms to look at learning attitudes, student self-concepts, and learning roles, while recommended by the planning meeting, is not possible because documentary data must be gathered, analyzed and reported before the end of June. 2) Other members of the learning site staff, such as cooks, custodians, social workers, etc. will be interviewed or asked to join focus groups beginning in September.]

B. DOCUMENTATION OF

4. Learning site climate, affective atmosphere, and morale

METHODS:

a. A published, validated, climate survey (J. Epstein) will be supplied by CAREI. Learning sites will be asked to administer it in selected classrooms; it takes about 20 minutes. Site researcher will meet with selected teachers to explain the process and aims. If the learning sites have additional climate surveys, they are asked to give the site researcher copies of the results; *1 hour to help set this up and convey aims.*

b. Analysis of language used in documents, in meetings, in interviews, in classrooms--Research team will content analyze data gathered by all the other methods for affective content; *NO research time, analysis only.*

c. Direct observation--Focus on affective behaviors and language and on site appearance as it contributes to learning climate. Field researcher will observe at times when students are present in the hallways, before and after school and during lunch hours. Observer may also talk informally to students at these times. Learning sites will be asked to let everyone know that these observations will be taking place; *for number of hours, see below, 4d.*

d. Informal questioning of learners--about general learning climate; *2 hours for c & d.*

[NOTE: Further methods for studying learner participation and outcome will be developed next year.]

C. DOCUMENTATION OF

5. Decision making and leadership

METHODS:

a. Questions on leadership will be included in focus group discussions--with teachers, district leadership team, board members, parents, community members, and union representatives; *NO additional research time, included in other methods.*

b. Questions on leadership will be included in individual interviews--with principal and learning site opinion leaders; *ditto*

[NOTE: Observation of staff meetings and other additional methods, such as surveys, for exploring leadership will be designed for next year.]

D. DOCUMENTATION OF
6. Staff development

METHODS
a. Part of this information will be taken from documents--collected at both local and district levels; *NO research time, analysis only.*

b. Questions on staff development, on what has been done, and on participation in it will be included in--focus group discussions and interviews with teachers, district leadership team, principal, and union representatives; *NO additional research tine, included in other methods.*

[NOTE: Additional questions about what people would like to see for staff development in the future will be included in the research for next year as will observation of staff development seminars, etc. This may include a teacher survey on quality of work life.]

III/IV. **District and Community Context--7 hours per district for entire district, regardless of number of schools/sites within it**

DOCUMENTATION OF
District and Community Values, Norms, and Change Issues affecting Learning Sites

METHODS
a. Focus group discussions with the district leadership team involved in the OEL project and in change initiatives in the district--Districts will be asked to identify the individuals on the team for the field worker and to arrange an hour and a half meeting of the team for this purpose; *1-1/2 hours.*

b. Focus group discussion with 2 to 3 School Board members of varying opinions, 1 hour--Districts will be asked to identify Board members with different views for the field worker and to arrange an hour meeting for this purpose; *1 hour.*

c. Focus group discussion with community group actively involved with the school, 1 hour--Districts and/or learning sites will be asked to identify groups for the field worker and to help arrange an hour meeting with a designated group for this purpose; *1 hour.*

d. Interview or focus group with individual or group representing the local Union, 1 hour--Districts or learning sites will be asked to identify union leader(s) or members for the field worker and to help arrange a single hour meeting; *1 hour.*

e. Focus group discussion with 1) 2 to 5 actively involved parents, 1 hour, and 2) with 2 or 3 parents not usually involved with the school, 1 hour--Learning sites will be asked to help identify parents for the field worker and to help arrange both meetings; *1 hour each, total 2 hours.*

[NOTE: Next year the CAREI team plans to look at community outreach issues related to change.]

V. Status on 21 Potential Outcomes Listed by State

DOCUMENTATION

Because the CAREI study is not an evaluation and because the learning site transformations are to be worked out at the local level and will involve different starting points and various approaches, the team was asked not to design specific research methods around the 21 outcomes. Rather, research strategies will be designed to be sensitive to what is happening at each site as it undertakes the transformation process and to look at issues relating to the spirit of transformation included in the 21 outcomes.

METHODS

The best method for including the 21 outcomes within the holistic research process is by 1) grouping the outcomes and then using the concepts and principles behind them in designing areas to observe and topics to be included in interviews and focus groups and 2) using the concepts, principles, and structural issues embedded in the 21 outcomes to guide part of the data analysis and reporting processes; *NO researcher time, included in analysis.*

VI. Additional Documentation--Remaining 2-3 Hours

The site researcher will be sensitive to the local site needs and will schedule some additional research related to local site culture after completing the above. It might include a focus group discussions with learners, observation at meetings, attendance at staff development activities, etc. Additional research will be scheduled in consultation with local site personnel; *2 to 3 hours on researcher selected methods/topics.*

Code #1/Salmor

SPOT OBSERVATION COVER SHEET

ITE	DATE	OBSERVER CODE

.01 Location of Observation (Describe physical organization, books, materials, types of visual displays - poster, Learner's artwork - sketch floor plan if helpful):

Grade(s):_____Number of Students: M_____ F_____ Number of Staff: M_____ F____

.02 Number and size of groups on initial observation:

A_____ B_____ C_____ D_____ E_____ F_____

3 Type of groups (reading, math, social studies..., multi-age; ability-grouped):

.04 Number and size of new groups (if changed during observation period):

Time of change:_____

A_____ B_____ C_____ D_____ E_____ F_____

.05 Type of groups (reading, math, social studies..., multi-age; ability-grouped):

CODE ALL OBSERVATION DATA SHEETS AND STAPLE TO COVER SHEET IMMEDIATELY!

Code #2/Gray

SPOT OBSERVATIONS

Use new sheet for each ± 5minute period or change in section II or III

Beginning time:	Page number:

II. ACTIVITY

.01 How organized:

.02 Who leads - roles:

.03 Who follows - roles:

.04 Materials being used:

III. ENGAGEMENT/ EXCITEMENT

.05 Focus of Learner's attention/differences by group:

.06 Describe excitement about activity and quality of Learner focus:

.07 Percent off task: (example: 3 of 10 Learners not participating = 3/10)

A_____ B_____ C_____ D_____ E_____ F_____

IV. ATMOSPHERE

.08 Describe visible markers of Learner emotion:

.09 Describe Learner activity/noise level:

.10 Samples of Learner conversation and comments:

V. TEACHER AFFECT

.11 Describe the Teacher activity:

.12 Describe visible markers of Teacher emotion:

.13 Describe the Teacher social interaction:

.14 Samples of Teacher comments:

VI. PEER INTERACTION

.15 Describe general peer interaction:

- specific peer interactions:

.16 Additional comments: (rhythm, postures, interruptions, etc.)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Writing & Drawing Assignments

Note to the Teacher

This exercise is intended to draw from the students responses that will indicate their impressions of and attitudes toward their school and their school experience without directing the nature of their response. While the directions may appear to be ambiguous it is intended to give the students the opportunity to interpret and decide exactly what to put into their responses without precise, limiting instructions.

For student in grades 1 - 3:

Draw a picture that shows something about "My School And Me". Draw anything you want to that shows what school is like for you. Ask an adult to help you write a title on it that tells what is in the picture.

For student in grades 4 - 6:

Draw a picture that shows something about "My School And Me". Draw anything you want that shows what school is like for you. When you are done, write a short sentence (at the top of it) that explains the picture.

For students in middle, junior, and senior high school:

Write a description of your most memorable (good or bad) day in school telling about what happened throughout that day;

or,

Write a description of the best kind of school that you can imagine for students like you.

Climate Observation 1

Observation of Climate, Affective Atmosphere, and Morale

Focus on affective behaviors and language and on site appearance as it contributes to learning climate. Field research will observe at times when students are present in the hallways, before and after school and during lunch hours. Observer may also talk informally to students at these times. Try to capture site character.

Observer Name _____ Location _____ Date _____

.01 Site Map, usually these can be collected in the main building office, if not, draw a rough sketch map on another sheet of paper and label it.

.02 Architecture, observe it and document its ability to enhance or detract from learning.

What kind of learning/teaching does the architecture suggest, enhance, detract from? How does it support/detract from professional, personal, and social needs of administration, teachers, staff, or students?

Insert and number additional pages for this item if necessary.

5/01/90

Climate Observation 2

.03 Document materials posted or displayed in buildings at various locations.

Insert and number additional pages for this item if necessary.

Climate Observation 3

.04 Document teacher/student behaviors and activities noted in public areas when students are present.

Insert and number additional pages for this item if necessary.

Climate Observation 4

.05 Document natural language overheard in public places when students are present.

Insert and number additional pages for this item if necessary.

05/01/90

Climate Observation 5

.06 Talk informally to students. Note the questions or comments you make and their responses.

Insert and number additional pages for this item if necessary.

Introduction to Teacher Focus Group Interview

Thank you very much for participating in this interview. As you may know, (name of site) is one of a few schools in Minnesota which is participating in a pilot project involving outcome-based education. This research project is a collaborative effort among the participating learning sites, the state department's Office of Educational Leadership, and the University of Minnesota. In this initial phase of the project, we are interested in collecting base-line information in order to assist the learning sites in examining where they are with respect to readiness for change as the project begins. This is not an evaluation. The questions and information gathered are based upon the concerns and questions which learning site representatives indicated to us would be most helpful to address at this time. Our hopes are to provide the participating learning sites with as much of this information as possible.

Confidentiality: We wish to assure you that your names will be kept confidential, your names will not be in our files and you will remain unidentified in any reports we produce. A summary of findings from all focus interviews at all sites will be mailed to you by July 1.

On Focus Groups: The purpose of these focus groups is to allow us to collect as much useful information as possible in a brief period of time and in a manner which does not become burdensome to school people. The discussion will cover a number of important topics, 1) your community, 2) your perspective on (name of site), 3) your students, 4) changes at (name of site) in recent years, 5) the Office of Educational Leadership's outcome-based education project, and 6) your thoughts about the future of (name of site). Given the relatively short length of the focus group discussion, the interviewer will need to keep the conversation moving along and will make every effort to give everyone in the group an opportunity to respond. The shortness of this interview session certainly does not mean we are not interested in your thoughts and concerns. The interviewers will be visiting your sites on several occasions and would welcome any other information you want to share with them.

DISTRICT AND COMMUNITY INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS
RESEARCHER NOTES

FOR: DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM

Districts will be asked to identify the individuals on the team for the field worker and to arrange an hour and a half meeting of the team for this purpose.
TIME ALLOTTED: One and one-half hours

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Districts or learning sites will be asked to identify school board members with varying opinions for the field workers and to help arrange an hour meeting.
TIME ALLOTTED: One hour

UNION REPRESENTATIVES

Districts or learning sites will be asked to identify union leader(s) or members for the field worker and to help arrange an hour meeting.
TIME ALLOTTED: One hour

COMMUNITY GROUPS ACTIVELY INVOLVED WITH SCHOOL

Focus group discussion will be with community group actively involved with the school. Districts and/or learning sites will be asked to identify groups for the field worker and to help arrange a meeting for this purpose. [Community groups may include: Tribal Council, Chamber of Commerce, Lions, Extension Clubs, Special Need's Parent Groups]
TIME ALLOTTED: One hour

PARENTS INVOLVED/NOT INVOLVED WITH THE SCHOOL

Focus group discussion with 1) actively involved parents and 2) with parents not usually involved with the school. Learning sites are asked to help identify parents for the field worker and to help arrange an hour meeting for this purpose.
TIME ALLOTTED: One hour

PURPOSES: TO DOCUMENT

- Decision making and leadership.
- Staff development.
- District and community values, norms, and change issues affecting learning sites.
- District context: stakeholder concerns, history, views of change, where do things fit, where does project fit in district picture, leadership, resources, politics, power, structural issues.
- Community context: community perceptions of and attitudes toward project, change, education, learning, outcomes, district, future; involvement and decision-making patterns, politics, economic, demographic, socioeconomic contexts; communication patterns with, among, between key stakeholders.

DEFINITION:

- Community: Citizens concerned with this school.

Appendix B:
Context of the Study

Context of the Study

In any research project undertaken, the values of the individuals involved in the study are reflected in decisions and choices made during the project as well as conclusions drawn from the results. Anderson and Ball[1] suggest that "the values, predispositions, and preferences of . . . [the researcher] . . . play a prominent role in determining the design of . . . the measures, the kinds of analysis, and the interpretation." A second fundamental tenet involved in conducting research and/or evaluation revolves around the researcher/evaluator's identification and compensation of the constraints affecting the study. More specifically, constraints refer to those elements in the setting, limitations or concerns which are likely to have an effect on, or influence how the research/evaluation is conducted. The constraints and/or limitations of this study are related to the nature and sheer size of the project itself, the duplicity of the "intervention" studied, the newness of conducting research collaboratively, time constraints, and the scope of the original research design. This section of the report describes contextual factors which affected the implementation of the OEL R&D project.

The Collaborative Process

Collaboration is a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible. It is based on simple adages that "two heads are better than one" and that one by itself is simply not as good. The objective of collaboration is to create a richer, more comprehensive appreciation of the problem among the stakeholders than any one of them could construct alone.[2]

A first factor which affected the research component of the OEL R&D Program is related to the collaborative process which was used during the design and implementation of Phase I. This type of planning and decision-making style requires all members to be involved in a decision and requires a group to reach consensus on a single issue before it proceeds onto the next one. Several individuals reported that their project site's representation at the planning and decision-making activities had been passed down to them. In some cases, this was a simple delegation of responsibility where the individual fully represented the views of his/her district. In other situations, however, it appears that the responsibility was delegated to individuals who did not have the full authority to negotiate decisions on behalf of their project site.

Second, group members need to be equally committed to the goals and objectives of the project in order for the decision process to remain efficient and effective. This was also not always the case. While the levels of commitment, interest, and involvement in educational transformation were very high in the majority of project sites, there were several districts which indicated that the specific goals and objectives of the OEL educational transformation project presented to them after the grant was accepted were less of a priority for them.

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[1] Scarvia B. Anderson and Samuel Ball. *The Profession and Practice of Program Evaluation.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1980).

[2] Gray, Barbara. 1989. *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers).

Third, group members involved in planning and decision-making need to be equally committed to the collaborative process and willing to trust the other parties involved in the planning and decision-making processes. When the historical autonomy and political issues among the State Department of Education, the University of Minnesota, and the state's independent school districts are considered, trying to design and implement a research study as complex as this study illuminates just how deeply those values and attitudes have become entrenched.

Finally, collaboration is a relatively new approach to problem-solving and planning in educational settings. This is a dramatically different role for many educators who have, in the past, "learned how to adjust their priorities according to the current administrative figure" in charge of their school. While many educators indicated that they appreciated the chance to provide their input into decisions, a number reported that the system was cumbersome and time consuming.

Time Constraints

In early 1989, school districts throughout the state of Minnesota were encouraged to submit plans which outlined processes to transform their schools into new structures that included learner outcome based systems of education. The ten R&D project sites were selected from the statewide competition in September, 1989. The State plan was developed after the selection process. As a result, most of the project sites had to revise their original plans for educational change. This, in turn, became a source of irritation for a number of the project sites.

In January 1990, OEL released a formal Request for Proposals to potential and interested research contractors. The OEL accepted a revised version of the CAREI proposal in March, 1990. The collaborative planning meeting was scheduled for April 3rd and 4th, 1990, for the OEL staff, project site R&D participants, and university researchers with the majority of time spent developing and negotiating the scope and methods to be included in the research plan.

Because of the short time frame for completing the data collection activities, schools were also put in the position of having to hurriedly schedule teachers, parents, staff members, school board members, community leaders, etc. to participate in focus groups and interviews. As a result, a majority of the focus groups, which were designed to be representative of the community, were assembled on the basis of who was willing and available to be involved as opposed to who ideally would have been included. In addition, all of the data collection activities had to be conducted in the late spring which is difficult time of a school year to place extra demands on schools and school staff.

Limitation of the Research Methods Employed

A final factor of the study is related to the nature of the qualitative data collection methods used throughout Phase I of the research. While one of the greatest strengths of qualitative methods is that they are capable of generating high quality, accurate, in-depth information from information sources, the number of individuals which can be included in the data collection process is limited and generalizing the results to the greater population can be somewhat risky and questionable, especially when the research period is short and the number of individuals studied is small. In addition to the diversity and representativeness of the subjects included in the data collection process, the quality of qualitative results can also be affected by the period and length of time in which data has been collected. While the research

results and site reports that were developed accurately reflect the trends, opinions, and attitudes of the parties included in the research process, they may or may not accurately represent the viewpoints of the larger community.

Appendix C: Quantitative Results

Office of Educational Leadership

Feedback Inventory

Findings Based on
Surveys Returned as of 12/28/90

N = 326 out of 485
Response Rate = 67%

This is an anonymous, confidential inventory. By completing this inventory, you will be able to record your personal opinions and reactions to a variety of issues and conditions related to the research and development process of the Office of Educational Leadership.

1. Please indicate your **current position**: (Check one)

33%	☐ Teacher, Elementary	*4%*	☐ Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent
10	☐ Teacher, Junior High	*4*	☐ Other Central Office
17	☐ Teacher, High School	*14*	☐ Principal or Assistant Principal
5	☐ Teacher, Special Education	*13*	☐ Other _____

2. Please indicate the **total number of years that you have been employed in K-12 education**: (Check one)

1%	☐ Less than 1 year	*13%*	☐ 6 to 10 years
1	☐ 1 to 2 years	*13*	☐ 11 to 15 years
7	☐ 3 to 5 years	*65*	☐ 15 years or more

3. How many **years have you been in your current position?** (Check one)

7%	☐ 0 to 1 year	*13%*	☐ 6 to 10 years
10	☐ 1 to 2 years	*12*	☐ 10 to 15 years
20	☐ 2 to 4 years	*10*	☐ 15 to 20 years
11	☐ 5 to 6 years	*18*	☐ 20 years or more

4. Please indicate the **location of your learning site**: (Check one)

53% ☐ **Greater Minnesota** (Cambridge-Isanti/Princeton; Cass Lake-Bena; Halstad; South Central Education District; Winona)

38 ☐ **Suburban** (Columbia Heights, Fridley, Spring Lake Park, and St. Anthony-New Brighton Consortium; Elk River; Hopkins)

9 ☐ **Urban** (Minneapolis; St. Paul)

5. Have you **participated in any OEL activities/events?** *48%* ☐ No ☐ Yes* *52%*

*If yes, which ones have you participated in? (Check all that apply)

14%	☐ Collaborative Research Design Meeting (April, 1990)
30	☐ Interview/Focus Group with Researcher on Site (May-June, 1990)
32	☐ Clinical at Columbia Heights (June)/Experience at Saturn
18	☐ Managing Change: Transitions, Summer Workshops (Brainerd)
25	☐ Clinical at Mankato (August)
28	☐ Project Site Network Meeting(s)
7	☐ Collaborative Research Design Meeting (September)
27	☐ Developing Leadership for Transforming Education Cadre
21	☐ Other _____

6. Please indicate your **gender**:

56%	☐ Female	*44%*	☐ Male

7. Please indicate your **ethnic background**:

98%	☐ Caucasian	☐ Hispanic	☐ Pacific Asian
	☐ African American	☐ American Indian	☐ Other _____

8. Please indicate **how many separate professional growth activities you attend or are involved in each year**: (Check one)

1%	☐ None	*24%*	☐ 6 to 10 Activities
13	☐ 1 to 2 Activities	*22*	☐ More than 10 Activities
41	☐ 3 to 5 Activities		

9. In your opinion, what is the **best professional growth activity** you've participated in the past two years?

_____

_____

_____

The outcomes of a transformed learning site were developed by the Office of Educational Leadership (OEL) to guide an exploration of transformation activities occurring in schools statewide. Please answer each of the following questions as it relates to **your experiences in your classroom and/or school/learning site** in the context of the 17 OEL outcomes.

10. Using the scale below, please indicate how strongly you feel that **all students** in your school/learning site can learn core outcomes. (Circle one)

Strongly Disagree			*Mean = 5.8*			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain. _____

_____

11. How likely is it that your school/learning site can be **structured** to make this possible? (Circle one)

Not At All Likely			*Mean = 5.1*			Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain. _____

_____

12. How strongly do staff at your school/learning site support a **common vision** for the school? (Circle one)

No Support At All			*Mean = 4.7*			Strong Support
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

To what extent does your school/learning site's present vision **influence the short- and long-range planning** for your school? (Circle one)

No Influence At All			*Mean = 5.2*		A Great Amount of Influence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain. _____

_____

13. In this section, we'd like to determine the status/progress to date of various OEL learning site outcomes across the project schools/learning sites. *First*, for each targeted outcome listed below, please indicate whether your school/learning site **has developed or has in place a plan/strategy** for addressing the outcome. *Second*, using the seven-point scale below, please rate each of the outcomes for which you have a plan/strategy in place as to **the extent to which that plan/strategy has been developed and/or implemented**.

OEL Outcome	Has No Plan in Place	Has Plan in Place	Planning Stage Only						Plan Fully Implemented	
% w/Plan			*Mean*							
56 Teaching teams comprising diverse backgrounds, styles, and curricular strengths	☐	☐	*3.4*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49 Special area/low enrollment (e.g., art, physics) teachers included in teams and represented on site council	☐	☐	*3.5*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50 Programs coordinated across levels and among pre-K, K-12, and post-secondary education agencies	☐	☐	*3.4*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55 Coordinated services among agencies serving high risk youth and their families	☐	☐	*3.7*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31 Multi-age "communities of learners" in which an individual student stays with a team of teachers for at least three years	☐	☐	*2.8*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
64 Multiple assessments for assessing student progress, program decisions, and accountability	☐	☐	*3.2*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51 Advisor/advisee program for program planning, student input into curriculum, home contact/communication, and personal growth	☐	☐	*3.9*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49 Strategy for independent, self-directed student learning	☐	☐	*3.1*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
72 Professional growth embedded into team activities, learning site activities	☐	☐	*3.8*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42 Partnerships to expand learning opportunities on and off site	☐	☐	*3.0*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63 Outcomes aligned with state graduation outcomes	☐	☐	*3.6*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61 District expectations defined for site level	☐	☐	*3.7*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36 Reporting system appropriate for outcome based learning program using multiple assessments without grade level structure	☐	☐	*2.5*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55 Integrated curriculum	☐	☐	*3.0*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix D:
Survey Inventories

Office of Educational Leadership

Feedback Inventory

Form 1

This is an anonymous, confidential inventory. By completing this inventory, you will be able to record your personal opinions and reactions to a variety of issues and conditions related to the research and development process of the Office of Educational Leadership.

1. Please indicate your **current position**: (Check one)

- ☐ Teacher, Elementary
- ☐ Teacher, Junior High
- ☐ Teacher, High School
- ☐ Teacher, Special Education
- ☐ Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent
- ☐ Other Central Office
- ☐ Principal or Assistant Principal
- ☐ Other _____

2. Please indicate the **total number of years that you have been employed in K-12 education**: (Check one)

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 to 2 years
- ☐ 3 to 5 years
- ☐ 6 to 10 years
- ☐ 11 to 15 years
- ☐ 15 years or more

3. How many **years have you been in your current position?** (Check one)

- ☐ 0 to 1 year
- ☐ 1 to 2 years
- ☐ 2 to 4 years
- ☐ 5 to 6 years
- ☐ 6 to 10 years
- ☐ 10 to 15 years
- ☐ 15 to 20 years
- ☐ 20 years or more

4. Please indicate the **location of your learning site**: (Check one)

- ☐ **Greater Minnesota** (Cambridge-Isanti/Princeton; Cass Lake-Bena; Halstad; South Central Education District; Winona)
- ☐ **Suburban** (Columbia Heights, Fridley, Spring Lake Park, and St. Anthony-New Brighton Consortium; Elk River; Hopkins)
- ☐ **Urban** (Minneapolis; St. Paul)

5. Have you **participated in** any OEL activities/events? ☐ No ☐ Yes*

*If yes, which ones have you participated in? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Collaborative Research Design Meeting (April, 1990)
- ☐ Interview/Focus Group with Researcher on Site (May-June, 1990)
- ☐ Clinical at Columbia Heights (June)/Experience at Saturn
- ☐ Managing Change: Transitions, Summer Workshops (Brainerd)
- ☐ Clinical at Mankato (August)
- ☐ Project Site Network Meeting(s)
- ☐ Collaborative Research Design Meeting (September)
- ☐ Developing Leadership for Transforming Education Cadre
- ☐ Other _____

6. Please indicate your **gender**:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

7. Please indicate your **ethnic** background:

- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Pacific Asian
- ☐ Other _____

8. Please indicate **how many separate professional growth activities you attend or are involved in each year**: (Check one)

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1 to 2 Activities
- ☐ 3 to 5 Activities
- ☐ 6 to 10 Activities
- ☐ More than 10 Activities

9. In your opinion, what is the **best professional growth activity** you've participated in the past two years?

_____

_____

_____

The outcomes of a transformed learning site were developed by the Office of Educational Leadership (OEL) to guide an exploration of transformation activities occurring in schools statewide. Please answer each of the following questions as it relates to **your experiences in your classroom and/or school/learning site** in the context of the 17 OEL outcomes.

10. Using the scale below, please indicate how strongly you feel that **all students** in your school/learning site can learn core outcomes. (Circle one)

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain. _____

_____

11. How likely is it that your school/learning site can be **structured** to make this possible? (Circle one)

Not At All Likely						Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain. _____

_____

12. How strongly do staff at your school/learning site support a **common vision** for the school? (Circle one)

No Support At All						Strong Support
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

To what extent does your school/learning site's present vision influence the short- and long-range planning for your school? (Circle one)

No Influence At All						A Great Amount of Influence
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please explain. _____

_____

13. In this section, we'd like to determine the status/progress to date of various OEL learning site outcomes across the project schools/learning sites. *First*, for each targeted outcome listed below, please indicate whether your school/learning site **has developed or has in place a plan/strategy** for addressing the outcome. *Second*, using the seven-point scale below, please rate each of the outcomes for which you have a plan/strategy in place as to **the extent to which that plan/strategy has been developed and/or implemented**.

OEL Outcome	Has No Plan in Place	Has Plan in Place	Planning Stage Only						Plan Fully Implemented
Teaching teams comprising diverse backgrounds, styles, and curricular strengths	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Special area/low enrollment (e.g., art, physics) teachers included in teams and represented on site council	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Programs coordinated across levels and among pre-K, K-12, and post-secondary education agencies	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Coordinated services among agencies serving high risk youth and their families	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Multi-age "communities of learners" in which an individual student stays with a team of teachers for at least three years	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Multiple assessments for assessing student progress, program decisions, and accountability	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Advisor/advisee program for program planning, student input into curriculum, home contact/communication, and personal growth	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strategy for independent, self-directed student learning	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Professional growth embedded into team activities, learning site activities	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Partnerships to expand learning opportunities on and off site	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Outcomes aligned with state graduation outcomes	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
District expectations defined for site level	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reporting system appropriate for outcome based learning program using multiple assessments without grade level structure	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Integrated curriculum	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Office of Educational Leadership

Feedback Inventory

Form 2

This is an anonymous, confidential inventory. By completing this inventory, you will be able to record your personal opinions and reactions to a variety of issues and conditions related to the research and development process of the Office of Educational Leadership.

1. **Please indicate your current position**: (Check one)

- ☐ Teacher, Elementary
- ☐ Teacher, Junior High
- ☐ Teacher, High School
- ☐ Teacher, Special Education
- ☐ Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent
- ☐ Other Central Office
- ☐ Principal or Assistant Principal
- ☐ Other _____

2. **Please indicate the total number of years that you have been employed in K-12 education**: (Check one)

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 to 2 years
- ☐ 3 to 5 years
- ☐ 6 to 10 years
- ☐ 11 to 15 years
- ☐ 15 years or more

3. **How many years have you been in your current position?** (Check one)

- ☐ 0 to 1 year
- ☐ 1 to 2 years
- ☐ 2 to 4 years
- ☐ 5 to 6 years
- ☐ 6 to 10 years
- ☐ 10 to 15 years
- ☐ 15 to 20 years
- ☐ 20 years or more

4. **Please indicate the location of your learning site**: (Check one)

- ☐ **Greater Minnesota** (Cambridge-Isanti/Princeton; Cass Lake-Bena; Halstad; South Central Education District; Winona)
- ☐ **Suburban** (Columbia Heights, Fridley, Spring Lake Park, and St. Anthony-New Brighton Consortium; Elk River; Hopkins)
- ☐ **Urban** (Minneapolis; St. Paul)

5. **Have you participated in any OEL activities/events?** ☐ No ☐ Yes*

*If yes, which ones have you participated in? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Collaborative Research Design Meeting (April, 1990)
- ☐ Interview/Focus Group with Researcher on Site (May-June, 1990)
- ☐ Clinical at Columbia Heights (June)/Experience at Saturn
- ☐ Managing Change: Transitions, Summer Workshops (Brainerd)
- ☐ Clinical at Mankato (August)
- ☐ Project Site Network Meeting(s)
- ☐ Collaborative Research Design Meeting (September)
- ☐ Developing Leadership for Transforming Education Cadre
- ☐ Other _____

6. **Please indicate your gender**:

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

7. **Please indicate your ethnic background**:

- ☐ Caucasian
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ American Indian
- ☐ Pacific Asian
- ☐ Other _____

8. **Please indicate how many separate professional growth activities you attend or are involved in each year**: (Check one)

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1 to 2 Activities
- ☐ 3 to 5 Activities
- ☐ 6 to 10 Activities
- ☐ More than 10 Activities

9. In your opinion, what is the **best professional growth activity** you've participated in the past two years?

_____

_____

_____

The outcomes of a transformed learning site were developed by the Office of Educational Leadership (OEL) to guide an exploration of transformation activities occurring in schools statewide. Please answer each of the following questions as it relates to your experiences in your classroom and/or school/learning site in the context of the 17 OEL outcomes.

10. One of the OEL learning site outcomes relates to **planning a personalized program** for individual students. Is this happening at your school/learning site?

☐ No ☐ Yes*

*If so, please describe. _____

_____

_____

11. Other learning site outcomes relate to **team processes** (e.g., communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and planning) and **site centered decision-making** regarding curriculum, budgeting, personnel, and other areas. Please indicate what activities have been developed at your school/learning site in these areas.

_____

_____

_____

12. How are **parents and community leaders** involved in your school/learning site?

_____

_____

13. What opportunities for **leadership development** are available at your school/learning site?

_____

_____

How are people selected for participation?

_____

_____

14. In this section, we'd like to determine the status/progress to date of various OEL learning site outcomes across the project schools/learning sites. *First*, for each targeted outcome listed below, please indicate whether your school/learning site has developed or has in place a plan/strategy for addressing the outcome. *Second*, using the seven-point scale below, please rate each of the outcomes for which you have a plan/strategy in place as to the extent to which that plan/strategy has been developed and/or implemented.

OEL Outcome	Has No Plan in Place	Has Plan in Place	Planning Stage Only						Plan Fully Implemented
Teaching teams comprising diverse backgrounds, styles, and curricular strengths	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Special area/low enrollment (e.g., art, physics) teachers included in teams and represented on site council	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Programs coordinated across levels and among pre-K, K-12, and post-secondary education agencies	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Coordinated services among agencies serving high risk youth and their families	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Multi-age "communities of learners" in which an individual student stays with a team of teachers for at least three years	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Multiple assessments for assessing student progress, program decisions, and accountability	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Advisor/advisee program for program planning, student input into curriculum, home contact/communication, and personal growth	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strategy for independent, self-directed student learning	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Professional growth embedded into team activities, learning site activities	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Partnerships to expand learning opportunities on and off site	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Outcomes aligned with state graduation outcomes	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
District expectations defined for site level	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reporting system appropriate for outcome based learning program using multiple assessments without grade level structure	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Integrated curriculum	☐	☐	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Office of Educational Leadership

Volume II: Case Studies

Submitted by:

Center for Applied Research
and Educational Improvement (CAREI)
College of Education
University of Minnesota

January, 1991

INTRODUCTION

This is Volume II of the "Office of Educational Leadership Evaluation Report for Phase I" and contains 39 individual case study reports of project and learning sites funded by the OEL from 1989-1991. Volume I describes the study's research design and methods and provides the forms used for baseline data collection from April to June, 1990, prior to any OEL sponsored clinicals. The reports presented here represent three units of school organization: districts (Reports 1-10); secondary schools, i.e., high schools, junior high schools, middle schools, and one combined elementary/middle school (Reports 11-27); and elementary schools or programs (Reports 28-39). Based on data collected using qualitative methods, each case study report provides narrative detail on two broad topics: a description of the site; and the status of change at that site, including in most cases information on the local approach to change, change efforts underway, and factors affecting the change process.

Site personnel selected the specific cases to be studied, so not all districts or schools have individual reports, and the reports here represent largely the perceptions and opinions of those who participated in interviews. In all cases we consciously tried to be sensitive to issues of racial diversity, however in some instances respondents' quotations and available documentation reflected local attitudes and language. The reports do not include site names because initial discussions in April, 1990 suggested the importance of making these as anonymous as possible, although this, finally, proved to be impossible given the nature of certain sites. We wish to thank our colleagues at the ten project sites and at the Office of Educational Leadership for their assistance in editing these baseline case studies.

CASE STUDY REPORT 1

I. Site Description

Located in greater Minnesota, this district includes three separate towns with a combined population of about 1200 and a wide range of family economic status. Farming has been the community's principal life style and economic support, and local farm families reportedly do very well. A small but growing number of people commute to a nearby city.

The district's small size is both a help and a handicap. On the positive side, familiarity creates both a community and a school atmosphere that is friendly, caring, and inclusive. On the negative side are financial strains and small town concerns. Lifelong friendships, family ties, and business connections make some community and school decision-making particularly difficult, as there is little buffering for those compelled to make tough choices.

The people in the community are expecting to slowly evolve from a tightly knit, homogeneous community to one that is more diverse. Most express a belief that farming will remain a central feature of the area, but also think their towns may become increasingly popular as bedroom communities to a nearby metropolitan area. The most pervasively voiced concern was for the long-term survival of the school. The threat of school closure plays a powerful role in school planning. It is widely accepted that this is a district whose very survival depends on its ability to provide the highest quality education in its region.

II. Change

This district has a history of support for new ideas, but in the last few years concern for school improvement has intensified. Several factors have come together to help raise the level of community awareness and readiness for change:

- A general concern for educational improvement
- An understanding that improved performance must be demonstrated to keep small schools from being closed down
- Parental demands for academic performance
- Progressive, change oriented leadership from principals at both the elementary and the high school
- Support from the district superintendent
- Positive working relationships between teachers and administrators

Virtually everyone who was interviewed identified the high school principal as the chief initiator of outcome-based education and related innovations in the district. A teacher "OBE Lead Team," a Parent Advisory Board, a supportive school board, and an alliance with a university teacher training program are all part of the district's OBE program.

CASE STUDY REPORT 2

I. Site Description

Economic and business conditions in the area farms and bigger towns impact this community. One respondent described recent experience as a "rural holocaust." In spite of that, all stores are occupied, and there are two or three strong businesses. However, there is no economic development plan. Individuals reported that they didn't want big industry, but would like little companies which could offer employment. Because of these conditions, social problems such as split homes, single parent families, shift work, and farmers working off the farm have become more pronounced. The population is declining and eroding the tax base. Youth go away and do not return. There is a "brain drain." The people who remain are aging and that raises the issue of services for the elderly. There has not been a bond issue for the school "for a long time," and yet the school was referred to as something that brought people and money into the town.

The people are described as conservative and hard-working. They are close-knit; everyone knows everyone else. Family is definitely a value and that was often the image used to describe themselves. "We pull together." "We are concerned for each other." Given that closeness, "ideas have to be discussed everywhere before they can be decided." When something has been talked about sufficiently, apparently, it gets decided and gets done. If it does not go through that process, it may be seen as "forced"--a word heard frequently in reference to school and the Department of Education. Such decision-making is unpopular and not worthy of support. The community is ready for change only in that change has been adequately presented to them, they have become convinced that it is in their interest, and will be beneficial to the community.

II. Change

The greatest transformation facing this district is the new Cooperation and Combination Plan to begin next year, and all energies will be directed to make that successful. Generally speaking, then, the OEL outcomes have a long way to go in this district. The only transformational issue specifically addressed in interviews was the OBE question. Most of the district respondents, including school board members, knew very little about "OBE" or that it had to do with classroom instruction. One thought OBE was a new name for what had been done back in the country school. The common concern expressed was that something new would be introduced and the expenses would be initially borne by the state, but eventually passed back to the district. A strong desire expressed by board members was that any attempt to make such changes should be carefully planned, all the way from origin to implementation. That includes supplying the necessary resources. Further, it must not be allowed to do any harm to present faculty members or to the present "quality of education."

CASE STUDY REPORT 3

I. Site Description

This report describes a collaboration of four districts located in "first and second ring" suburbs of a large metropolitan area. While the districts represent distinct cultural histories and experiences, this report will discuss their commonalities. The consortium's combined student population of 11,000 represents low to upper middle income families that are socially, economically, and racially mixed. Roughly twenty per cent of the households have children in school, while twenty-five per cent of the households represent senior citizens on fixed incomes. Minorities currently constitute five to ten per cent of the population, a percentage that is expected to increase in coming years. As noted in a survey by an independent research organization, a "divergence between low income retirees and the forty-five per cent dual income families suggests a moderate degree of difficulty in arriving at broad-based consensus on major policies."

People interviewed note a change in family structures within consortium districts that is affecting how schools work. "[There are] more single parent homes, more of both parents working, more [children] in latch-key. The amount of contact time kids have with parents is diminishing drastically. . . and parents are not often communicating with their neighbors. . . not getting together for 'coffee klatches' as they used to because of their 'busyness.'" The attitudes of the individuals interviewed ranged from appreciation for the support given by parents to a perception that parents are "dumping" family problems in the schools: "When you are under great economic stress, you don't have the time to put to education or put into the PTA or come to conferences or be as involved." "We have to remember that an awful lot of parents, people who are parenting right now, are extremely confused about it."

Also mentioned was the mobility of families in these districts: "Sixty per cent of those who start kindergarten in [one district's] elementary schools complete 5th grade here." "In the single parent homes, the kid [who] can't get along with mom moves in with dad." This situation is frustrating for teachers, one of whom commented, "I'm frustrated as an educator thinking how much society is expecting of the schools. They have given us so many jobs to do now besides academics, but they still expect the academics to be high. There just is not enough time in the day." Despite such concerns, however, standardized measures suggest that these districts are succeeding in their academic mission; many of the consortium classes score well above national averages.

In consortium districts, revenue is derived primarily from property taxes (48%), plus state and federal aid. The economic status of area residents is revealed by the twenty two per cent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch. The expenditure per student in consortium districts approaches $5,000, a level of expenditure that places one of the districts 30th out of 55 districts of comparable size. Approximately ninety per cent of the schools' general fund revenues support salaries and fringe benefits, and teacher salaries within the consortium range from $22,000 (a first year teacher with a BA) to $47,000. The student-teacher ratio at one learning site is 26.1:1, which, to one individual, is not "desirable for long-term quality education."

II. Change

While the consortium is a relatively new collaboration, each of the individual districts has worked to improve practice in recent years. For example, innovations such as revamped mathematics instruction and a "school within a school" to provide special programming for some middle school classes have, in the opinions of those involved, produced positive results. To encourage parents and the community to become more in-

volved in school activities, many programs specify participation in Individual Learning Option Plans (ILOP). Meetings, such as PTSA and "parent/principal coffees," make a point of providing time for parent and community input. At one learning site, staff brought parents and learners together for a three day, two night camp experience. Parents who were interviewed responded positively to their involvement: "The school has been pretty good in listening to the concerns of parents when they attend meetings."

However, parents and school staff alike are well aware that in spite of test score increases there is still room for improvement and that they have the capacity to change. An example given was the recent adoption of the Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program (MEEP) in several schools. As one person put it, "The process is new this year. Before, the principal had total control of the dollar, [and there was] no real participation by faculty. Now the staff is trying to understand and believe that they have a real influence in the process." Another innovation mentioned was the state's Assurance of Mastery program.

Many people commented on the history of innovative projects being initiated with great enthusiasm only to fade when funds disappeared. Several people noted that money has been spent on audiovisual equipment, but not on "current materials," and that equipment use has not been integrated into programs. Others pointed to the additional planning time required for teachers to integrate materials into existing courses. "There have been a lot of quick band-aid approaches to fix things, and then you move on to the next instead of examining things. They won't spend any money on it to continue it. They expect the teacher to get so excited about it that they are going to just do it. Projects are not watched over carefully."

A theme expressed clearly in interviews was that, whatever the proposed transformation, people would like to retain the strengths they perceive at their learning sites. "We're a comprehensive high school, we meet the needs of the students across the board when it comes to high school. We're not a gifted and talented school, we're not a vocational education school, but the kind of kids who roll out of here are as varied as the community itself." There is a tradition of pursuing "longterm quality education" in consortium districts, and people don't want this tradition lost. As one person put it, "They had a very good educational system in the beginning, and they have taken good care of it." In the opinions of those interviewed, Minnesota's open enrollment and choice programs have forced a reexamination of educational delivery systems and have even had an impact on classroom teaching methods at the four districts. School administrators report that they now define their populations differently.

Many mentioned staff development as a means used to effect change, although opinions varied as to its effectiveness to date. Teachers discussing the programs in group interviews commented on an inability to follow through on many sessions and on the competition between classroom work and opportunities presented only during the school day. In individual interviews teachers presented another side of the issue: "Staff development is important for whom? I know we have it, and I know there is a committee, and I know they do things once in a while, but so far I haven't seen too many positive things come out of it, I guess. I just know they exist."

The individuals interviewed had both positive and negative comments on outcome based education. Some questioned its conceptual basis: "OBE is an oversimplification in some respects. Outcome based education sound great. But what is it? I don't think anyone has truly defined it yet, at least to my satisfaction." Some considered the concept negatively because of prior experience: "Based on what they are doing for OBE, they have done the same kind of approach, don't you think 20 years ago, they did the same thing, then they came with team teaching, then modular [scheduling]--we have been re-inventing the wheel." Others were concerned about the impact on the learner in the classroom. "How does it relate to an individual and his/her given learning styles, or is it a 'time on task' kind of thing?" "They are increasing the paper work away from the kids, so we have less time to spend with the kids and expecting us to do more." Still others felt they knew what it

was: "OBE is simply this—good elementary school teachers are teaching middle and high school teachers what teaching is all about. This is not a joke. It's what good elementary teachers have done forever. . . now elementary is forcing high school to be just as accountable to kids."

Individuals from consortium districts repeatedly mentioned the lack of a local newspaper as a means of communication between the learning sites and the community. "Many times information is by word of mouth because the information is not available otherwise. The major means of communications is the grapevine." A top priority for the future in the opinion of one educator is the improvement of the "penetration of school district communication vehicles."

CASE STUDY REPORT 4

I. Site Description

In the words of one citizen, "diversity and growth" characterize this district. Once entirely rural, the community has expanded dramatically and grown to be a combination of farmers, blue collar workers, and white collar commuters employed in the metropolitan area. This mix of traditions and attitudes toward education presents an increasing challenge to school staff. In many families both parents work as, in some instances, do older children, limiting parental involvement in school activities. Some parents want their children prepared to go to college; others do not see this as a priority. Related to this mixture of socio-economic groups is the number of distinct communities in the district that make it difficult to create a sense of unity. Residents of two small communities in particular report feeling "alienated" and "remote from the core," sensing that while they contribute to the tax base, they somehow receive less than their fair share of school services. According to one individual, the district needs to focus on equity because "all kids are not getting the same opportunities."

Population increases have brought a parallel increase in student problems, and many now label their district as "similar to the northern suburbs of the Twin Cities," i.e., with more problems than those facing traditionally "rural areas", but with fewer than those of inner city districts. "With the influx, particularly those from the multiple family dwellings, we get a different clientele with a higher degree of needs than was previously here," notes one administrator. Data reportedly support this view; a full third of new students in the district qualified for special services of one sort or another before they moved. Teachers sense that increasing numbers of students must be held back and report some students with serious motivation problems. Many perceive that discipline problems have also increased. At one school a dramatic increase was reported: "In the past, 1 out of 10 students experienced discipline problems; now that is 1 out of 3." Many noted that these changes are not unique to this district, but, as one principal put it," . . social services haven't caught up with the needs."

Interviews suggest that two events--a teachers' strike and a recent referendum--have in some cases strained traditional support for the schools and created a wariness on the part of certain individuals, both within and outside the school staff. The administration's failure to provide summer school--believed by some to be supported in the referendum--was mentioned as a contentious issue within the district.

II. Change

In general, people reported district readiness to implement outcome based education--the project that was submitted to the Office of Educational Leadership. Some interviewed sense that the state's interest in OBE is an "attempt to bring accountability to education" and that this change is "inevitable." It is better, therefore, to "be a part of the change than to react to it." Administrative staff are taking a long-term, systematic approach, with building principals providing appropriate plans and processes for their individual learning sites. In this first year they have worked on developing a general staff awareness of OBE. As one administrator put it, "Everyone has gone to something." Plans for the second year include team planning for implementation and continued "marketing" of the OBE approach. "If we are successful in explaining the plans," notes one principal, "We will get the support from the community."

The idea of OBE has generally received positive response from school staff and parents. Some note that in various places across the district some ideas and practices similar to OBE were already in place, but were not organized and labelled as such. Certain teachers report that it has "gotten people to work together" and seems to help with

discipline problems. The community members interviewed expressed interest in OBE and preliminary support for changing "the ways schools are run."

However, a number of individuals voiced concerns. Community members and faculty alike are seeking clarification and evidence that "OBE works." Other concerns relate to implementation issues within the district. For example, will help be available from the district office in developing outcome-based curriculum? Is this a "fad that shall pass" or--worse yet--be underfunded, dooming its success? Some wondered if "the grass roots" will have any input and control over how and when things happen in their buildings. Teachers expressed interest in individualized or site-specific in-service training, rather than workshops that may not meet specific needs. Many expressed concern with the state's top down approach to the change process. In one person's opinion, the state requirements have "decreased the flexibility to do this project." Another suggested, "It is not any great bargain for [the district]; it is costing us money." One individual sensed that the state is " . . . struggling to keep up with what is happening in the schools. The schools got ahead of the state, and therefore they are training us in what we already know." A central concern for many was the lack of trust that "things will get carried to fruition," the fear that "OBE is a program that will fall from favor in the State Department" before it can be fully developed in the district.

CASE STUDY REPORT 5

I. Site Description

This is a small rural community in greater Minnesota whose economy is based on agriculture and commuters. The social life of the town is "significant," and "everyone knows everyone else." While the town is seen as "up to date" in terms of streets, fire halls, and so on, there are demands for more services and no tax base to support them. Consequently, community members are forced to look to their neighbors for cooperative ventures in public services. In the words of one individual, community resources and rural conditions have "trapped people." Since there is no market for property, people really can't afford to move even if they so desired. "People who stay are pretty much resigned to the situation."

There is a definite concern that the state legislature doesn't understand the dynamics of smaller communities and especially those of the smaller school system. This view was extended to include the State Department of Education. Almost all people interviewed agreed that "bigger is not necessarily better," and they wanted that message to be heard. The district's pairing and sharing arrangement that resulted in the recent loss of a high school in the community was seen as hurting community pride. For the first time in almost a hundred years, there is no high school there, implying a certain loss of identity. As some put it: "It is hard to see the benefits." One individual suggested that a longitudinal study be made of graduates of smaller schools and larger schools to see what becomes of them in life after high school, the clear implication being that those from small schools will be just as successful as those from larger schools. At the same time, those interviewed admitted that bigger schools may offer more social advantages and greater challenges for individuals, introducing them to a wider world. Yet they feared "the inevitable consolidation," seeing one school for the whole county as a worst case scenario.

A clearly stated goal was the necessity for a solid education in a good environment for all students, so they not only learn the basics, but are able to face the challenges of the future. It was agreed by all interviewed that school decisions were made by the school board, but that they received sufficient community input from all concerned. There was confidence expressed that the board would make the "right decisions." The personal nature of community interaction was often referred to as a factor in the decision-making process. Those interviewed seemed ready to stand by and let the process in place work well, as it has in the past. School personnel and community representatives wanted a cooperative atmosphere--home, school, and community working together. This relationship was also referred to as a resource for future educational changes. One fear expressed was that the schools would stay the same and stagnate.

II. Change

The fear of stagnation is one reason many in the community will support change. The following statements clearly indicate that those interviewed understand the need for change and want to see it take place:

- The children need more opportunities, especially the better students.
- The school should consider a year-round schedule.
- We can't be satisfied with minimums; bare minimums would be the worst.
- Schools have to be responsive to . . . the needs of the information age.
- Education should be exciting and fun for children; their enthusiasm

for schooling should not be allowed to diminish as it seems to somewhere around the 4th grade.

One concern is that their school system spends heavily to train young people who then leave the community. Their "good education" is used for the benefit of other communities that did not pay for the schooling. Also, there is a feeling reported that the present tax structure is not good. One individual offered a solution: the private sector should be allowed to participate in the educational programs of small communities. It could be done through tax deductible contributions to the districts where new company employees received their education. As a direct contribution to the school district of student origin, this would reduce the company's tax liability.

The transformational issue discussed in interviews was OBE. Some board members were well aware of its development, but parents interviewed felt that they had been only introduced to the concept. There was no doubt by anyone that if it was seen as beneficial, it would get support and that resources would be available. However, there were a number of concerns expressed by community representatives:

- How will the change be financed?
- How will the legislature handle it? Will the state introduce it and then continue to stand by and support it until it really is accomplished, or is it another fad?
- Will colleges train teachers to do OBE teaching? How soon?
- Will students learn how to do more individualized work?
- Will teachers be able to individualize instruction to the extent necessary?
- What will happen when students who have experienced OBE move on into a non-OBE classroom?

Two individuals questioned the very idea of OBE. "The entire concept is flawed. It is unrealistic to always experience success." "Schools should mirror life; it is all right for kids to learn some failure at school." These are the kinds of issues that will have to be answered before OBE can successfully be introduced and win the support of the community in this district.

CASE STUDY REPORT 6

I. Site Description

This community is an old town where, at one time, a large number of wealthy people lived. Today it is seen as "old fashioned" and "slow to move." The major employers in the area are factories and the schools. The disparity between wages is seen as one source of tension in the city. "But you know teachers are paid 'too much'--that's because of the low pay scale." A community board member phrased it as follows: "what teachers get, salary and benefits, relative to the city population is not great, but they are always complaining, asking for more." The city has a history of anti-unionism and depends upon a number of small manufacturers who are not unionized. There is a real division between the school board and the teachers' union. The division separates a group of people who have lived all or most of their lives in the community and the people who have moved into the area. Migration is itself an issue. The town suffers from the emigration of the best students, and there is a distrust of immigrants. The native residents are closely bound by family ties and tradition.

A serious problem confronting the city and the schools is racial prejudice. Teachers and parents describe episodes of racism which could lead to even greater divisiveness. Various groups are characterized as being more or less prejudiced. Some faculty members recalled the experiences of the 1970's when an effort was made to settle a number of Hmong refugees in the community. Most of the Asians have since left the area. Some teachers also mentioned the sexism in hiring, even though there is an Affirmative Action Plan on paper.

Some of the people interviewed attribute this racism to the "ingrown" nature of the city. There are not sufficient jobs to retain the better educated students; those who stay are likely to be children of blue collar workers who find similar work. This group is considered most prejudiced, with attitudes which are fostered in the home and passed on to successive generations of low income families. Some characterize members of the school board and parent groups as "natives"--"low income, poorly educated, and racist." The school leadership and "the friends of education" are characterized as "professional, sophisticated and well paid." These divisions reach into the school system where "natives" are considered less likely to seek professional growth and newcomers are more ambitious and worldly.

Racism in the schools is considered to be so prevalent that some teachers predict problems with state-mandated goals; "if the expectation was that the outcome for our students before they could graduate was to demonstrate an empathy towards minorities, we would not graduate students. I mean . . . [this school] would never have a graduating class."

II. Change

Indications of readiness for change are not favorable. The school board views the changes of the last five years in economic terms, and the economic situation is not good. Jobs and taxes are real concerns, and financial pressures often overcome the needs of the family. Child abuse and neglect are perceived by educators to result from some parents' inability to find work that pays well and to provide good child care while they are working. The voting public seems convinced that the schools are doing a good job, so they do not need more money to improve. In addition, the public sees that present school facilities are "good enough," and the buildings are sound, tangible links to the past. The community

is deteriorating, but, in the opinion of many, the resources and the will to reverse the trend are apparently not present. Such changes as will be made in the next decade will have to be done on terms of a limited financial investment.

If the public does want change in the schools, it is based on their comparisons of the public and private systems which have a more selective enrollment in terms of behavior issues. Those agitating for change are the people in the public educational system who see the middle school facilities as unsafe and the elementary schools as poorly designed for current educational methods. The restructuring of the past year has produced good results according to those directly involved. The staff at the middle school can be seen as drawing on each other's strengths to compensate for financial constraints. According to one parent, "The middle school teachers make the place work. It should be bombed." The challenges of working through the complex changes of the first year of restructuring under adverse conditions have produced a supportive camaraderie.

On the question of the introduction of the OBE program the school board members responded that it was presented as part of "back to the basics" and that it was accepted because of the grant money that came with it. The board members indicated strong resistance to the concepts used in OBE. "If it is to be successful, the teachers had better be prepared to pay a price If kids don't learn and have to be re-taught, then the teacher should re-teach for free; they failed the first time." Another member added, "Good teachers don't need OBE." The assumption in the OBE program that all children can succeed is challenged by some parents who say that "the first concept, 'no one fails,' is hard to take. It may work in some lower grades, but there are kids who should fail." "You still need failure. There cannot be success without failure."

The union representatives deny any part in bringing the program to the district and attribute the decision to a "grant writer." They say they were insulted by the way it was introduced "from the top down" and by "the presumption . . . that what we're doing is no good. We resent that." This comment appears frequently in interviews with teachers at all levels. Teachers relate the lack of financial support to the "anti-intellectual" sentiments and to resistance to any change. On OBE they also question the cost and whether the administration or the school board realize the amount of work required to implement it.

The union representatives were also concerned about the need for re-teaching, asking whether it would restrict creative teaching, "taking the fun out." "Is there a loss in the art of teaching?" Their primary concerns were "Is it good for the kids?" and the fact that the imposition of a delivery system "takes more than anyone understands." They, like several individual teachers interviewed, resent the implication that they are guinea pigs for an experimental program.

The reported attitudes of the board toward making these changes is that the politicians have taken over education and that the most needed changes are for the state legislature to abolish rules on collective bargaining, permit more local control, and to redirect school monies to facilities instead of salaries and social issues. They would like to see more use of the existing facilities by going to a longer school year and a longer school day. Those interviewed consider social problems the result of parents abdicating their responsibilities and that all the necessary parental involvement in the operation of the schools is in place. They feel the parents' place in decision-making is to "support what we do."

The respondents are concerned that the district has jumped too quickly and that there is no real understanding of the philosophy and basic structure of OBE and how to do it. "It is another band wagon and what we're doing here really isn't OBE." People who recognize the need for change are not convinced that it is possible to motivate all students to achieve or that OBE is the way to do it. "Self

esteem is very important, but how do you get a D student to feel good about himself in a class of A's and B's?"

To date, there has been a limited implementation of the OBE concepts in the middle school math program. An enthusiastic group of teachers developed the new curriculum during the summer of 1989 and began implementation that fall. At the end of the first year, administration, teachers and parents involved in the program are "believers." One parent interviewed described his son as "succeeding, getting good grades for the first time." The principal singled out one teacher as instrumental in the successful implementation of the new program and jokingly suggested that many of the school problems could be solved by "cloning" her.

The people working to transform the district see it as a way to attack this pattern of low achievement, racism, and stagnation. "The attitude must be that we aren't going to accept average anymore, our expectations are better. We have to do that in the school. I think that we definitely can make the change, we can't do it over night, but we've made some tremendous strides in math and we're excited about going on with it, but we want to do it in language arts, and science too. It's a slow process, but you bet we could do it."

CASE STUDY REPORT 7

I. Site Description

This project site represents a collaboration between neighboring districts. In both districts (one of which comprises two separate communities), the economic base has shifted during recent years from an agricultural and industrial economy to a service economy, and the population of the surrounding counties has grown as commuters to the Twin Cities have purchased homes. As a result, the traditionally conservative communities are experiencing more diversity in their population and culture. Many people interviewed discussed how diverse types of families have created greater economic gaps "between the haves and have nots." More single parent families and families with both parents working outside the home have created challenges for school personnel. In addition, many students hold part-time jobs and work, in one teacher's estimate, as many as 30 hours a week outside of school. Leadership in both districts must be concerned about the "kind of change acceptable to various groups in the community."

Within one district there is an ongoing rivalry between two distinct communities. One is geographically closer to the Twin Cities, with roughly eighty percent of its work force commuting to the metropolitan area each day. Some residents report that this community has become more "suburban" as increasing numbers of transient people move there. For some this creates the sense of being more connected to the cities and city problems than to the place where they live. In contrast to the more blue collar workforce of this community, the other community is more dependent on local business, government, and health care industries for income and is home to more professionals like doctors and lawyers. Because of the resultant split in socio-cultural and economic status, there are continuing and sometimes heated discussions within the district over funding for education.

Community leaders who were interviewed said they "trust the school board and the superintendent of the district," although some mentioned a growing awareness among business representatives that high school graduates are not fully prepared for employment. Some members of the school board expressed a strong commitment to OBE.

The nearby district that is collaborating on the OEL project is more largely middle class, where support for educational change is not perceived as pervasive. In interviews several individuals expressed the need to improve school/community relations. As one teacher put it, "I think a lot of people in the community are not sympathetic to our needs." Another educator said, "My concern is that education is not encouraged by families, and, in the larger scheme of things, where is the priority of education?. . . They love their kids, but there is no status for education." A member of the district's school board summarized: "People rarely take interest in what the young kids are doing. . . [and] in the high school, there is a lot of apathy." The challenge facing the district leadership is great; "I would like to see [our community] roaring into the 21st century, but by the year 2000 we have to move quickly [just] to move out of the 1950's."

II. Change

A cooperative relationship formed between the neighboring school districts seems to be a major source of mutual encouragement for OBE enthusiasts. In both districts the driving force for OBE came from a core leadership group and a few volunteer teachers. Overall, both districts are in the early stages of implementing

OBE. Project leadership expressed strong commitment to the OEL process, with teachers and administrators at both districts reporting a willingness to implement change. One person estimated that one district could be "fully OBE" in ten years. In the other district, OEL is seen as a change with "a lot of promise." As a board member put it, "[Students] would not oppose it if they understood it." Some teachers have been to workshops and report seeing how to use outcomes in their classes; one noted that OBE "doesn't seem far different" from current practice. District leadership is clear about the importance of change--" . . . any staff member who is devoted to change can get support to do something"--and a special program frees teachers for up to six weeks to develop new approaches.

While there is enthusiasm toward improving educational practice a number of individuals at the two districts were skeptical about the prospects for OBE. Several issues were mentioned including the financial support required for change; the willingness of the OBE and union leadership to share information and implement real change; and the potential burden of paperwork a personalized curriculum would add. Many said they were working just to understand the concept of outcome based education, let alone implement it, and others were concerned that the staff development program of the district was a "mere formality" and unlikely to provide needed support. Further, with a district staff development component in place, financial support for out-of-district workshops has been limited.

CASE STUDY REPORT 8

I. Site Description

This suburban district, serving a total population of approximately 60,000 residents, has a reputation for quality. Its mission is to "offer high-quality education in a dynamic, supportive learning environment; and to help all learners develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to lead healthy, productive, fulfilling, and socially responsible lives in a diverse and changing world." Discussions with students, parents, staff and administrators at each site, as well as with central office administrators, suggest strong support for the district mission. Outstanding individuals and programs, including programs on community involvement, writing, basic skills assistance, Presidential scholars, and technology, have received awards, including national recognition. The community generally has high expectations for its students and schools. Although representatives of the district administrative offices, junior high and senior high expressed a lack of a "sense of community," community support and involvement in education is evident at each OEL site and throughout the district. All those interviewed praised parents' contributions to the district, and the schools work to be responsive to parental interests. Parents have an opportunity to give input through volunteering to serve in such areas as the OBE Task Force and the PER Committee at both the district and the building level.

Students come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, although minority students average only 3% at the elementary site, 10% at the junior high site, and 6% at the high school. Many support services work toward meeting the special needs of all students, and the importance of meeting the needs of the "whole student" was clearly voiced and demonstrated at each site. The high school houses an alternative school within the school, the junior high offers a work experience program, and the elementary school employs a full time counselor to identify, befriend, and guide at risk learners. The district has an affirmative action plan. Basic educational opportunities exist for the minority student, the handicapped student, and the juvenile offender. Classes for special needs students are offered in each school. Many students are mainstreamed into classes, but special education teachers and some parents would like to see more mainstreaming to develop appreciation and compassion toward others unlike themselves. A number of people thought more attention, time and money should go toward the average student who "falls through the cracks" and the talented student.

More than 70% of district students score above the national norm for achievement as measured by standardized tests. Approximately 70% of the district's graduating seniors attend college. However, a number of parents, teachers, and leaders expressed concern that objective tests will be the sole indicator of a student's success. Teachers in each school expressed a need to develop and foster self-esteem as an important ingredient of success, but found it difficult to measure. The material needs and services that enable teachers to focus on teaching are provided at each site. Many opportunities for professional growth are available, although teachers expressed a need for time to thoughtfully plan and implement new methods if they are to make an effective difference. The leadership in each site is primarily a consensus-building model, one that is appreciated, but often "time-consuming."

Decision-making in the district is multi-faceted. A number of teachers, school leaders, and parents reported that the role of the school board has changed in recent years. Many teachers stated that "the school board has become

increasingly demanding in trying to make some decisions. They're controlling, but still prefer some input." "It has changed. It used to be supportive where teachers would go to the administrator, and issues would be initiated at the teacher level. In recent years, the board has initiated and interpreted student achievement policy." Another leader noted, "During the last three to five years the state also has been more prescriptive and less facilitative." Some leaders feel ignored as they receive directives from the state. The superintendent is highly respected by district personnel. "The superintendent's strong suit is to meet with groups of people all over," stated one person.

While some decisions are made in the central office by the superintendent, the Board of Education, the Curriculum Council, and the PER Committee, the decision-making process at all three project sites is participatory and collaborative. The principals appear to have latitude for decision-making in their own buildings, and faculty have opportunity for input in most decisions within the schools.

II. Change

During the last few years the school system has worked with many changes affecting their schools, including an elementary age population boom, more retired individuals, an increased number of multiple dwellings, and construction of many expensive homes in the area. Other recent changes include increased staff turnover due to retirements, increased empowerment of advisors involved in the new curriculum development efforts, and the mainstreaming of more handicapped students. Each OEL site and the district at large appears to welcome change, especially if site staff initiate and drive the process. Historically, the individuals and groups within the sites and district have researched ideas, initiated change, and become models for other sites and districts. Generally on the forefront of change, they prefer to "create change rather than respond to it."

Parents, teachers, professional organizations and district leaders had heard of or talked about OBE in relation to an OBE grant. However, there was little or no understanding of OEL. Although the site administrators had received limited information of the OEL proposal, teachers and the professional organization were not aware of it. Several parents and district leaders called attention to their efforts at establishing and evaluating outcomes as something they know by a name other than OBE. They believed the OEL/OBE grant was a way to provide funds to actually implement the present policy, measure outcomes, and work on outcome based education at the same time. The various interpretations of "outcomes" have caused concern. Some leaders believed that the OBE grant is redirecting the intentions of their current policy. One leader stated, "We submitted a proposal and then the State Department came on with a plan that superseded ours." Some believed that the state negated the district goals to some degree: "I'm concerned about the inconsistency. What was agreed to out front hasn't been happening."

Other concerns about the OBE project were expressed. Several people felt the emphasis needs to be about "the main things, with latitude given to reach those goals." A number of parents, seeking a "clear picture of OBE," wondered how this is different from management by objectives or mastery management. In addition, they felt tests are not a suitable model for evaluating outcomes in certain areas.

Everyone seemed to agree on the need to get a common understanding about the meaning of OBE. "I'm nervous when the dollars go off to specific places before the meaning is established," commented a board member. "It seems to be

changing the intent of what we're doing. It's too top down. We're being asked to do [things one] way and to conform," stated another. A leader representing several individuals said, "If the state wants OBE for graduation in 1994-1995, there needs to be time and money designated for it. There's a leeriness because it seems jammed down the teachers' throats."

Teachers interviewed said there has been no staff development provided about OBE other than a general introduction when an outside consultant gave information to all staff in the district at the opening of the 1989-1990 school year. "No one has been taught how to do OBE," commented many teachers. Some people attended OBE classes, a few went to special conferences, some received written materials in discussion meetings, and some went to Johnson City, NY, and to Arizona. Also a few mentioned that the district coordinators brought some people together to write general district objectives during half of the 1989-1990 school year.

Some teachers who represent curriculum areas have worked within their own fields of expertise to identify program outcomes, and a few have begun to work across disciplines to identify outcomes. The district has worked for six years on components that have led to the implementation of a student achievement policy based on learner outcomes for all disciplines. However, there is some confusion as to the meanings and relationships of outcome based education and the student achievement policy. Teachers expressed a desire to work toward interdisciplinary outcomes, but are uncertain and unclear about how to design and implement the process. They also would like to have all schools participate in the process in order for it to be meaningful and "time efficient" for the students and teachers.

CASE STUDY REPORT 9

I. Site Description

The land within a five mile radius of a small greater Minnesota lake and nearby town is the site of a national forest and an American Indian reservation. The reservation serves as headquarters for a Native American tribe. The number of whites and, more dramatically, of Native Americans in the area increased from 1980 to 1987. The reservation's population of 5,364 Native Americans is nearly double the total population of the immediate community. The population--both white and Native American--represents predominantly the lower to middle socio-economic classes, and the average family income is below the national average.

In the opinion of those interviewed, the area features a "white ruling class." These whites can reportedly be divided into two groups: members of old families, well educated, and primarily professional; and people who have moved to the area more recently--white "baby boomers" who are politically liberal, and progressive. At one time they "were hippies, but now [they] have identities." This second group tends to support the Indians on various issues.

The family structure of the area is described as having a more dramatic range than is typically the case, from single parent families to more traditional nuclear families to extended mixed families. In the words of one, the white community fits the "typical Minnesota family patterns of divorce, separation, and remarriages." Many single parent families, roughly equal numbers of white and Indian, live on welfare or AFDC (Aid for Dependent Children). As in other communities, dysfunctional families reportedly exhibit "violence," "incest," "chemical abuse," and "teen pregnancies."

More unusual are extended family arrangements. One respondent noted, "We have a tight extended family network, especially with Indian families." The mixed families may not include an original parent in the home, leaving the parenting to aunts, uncles, or grandparents. Some strong families take in children who are not wanted elsewhere. An important characteristic of certain Indian families is their mobility, leading some families with ties to the Twin Cities to move there for a short while, then return.

People report an historical divisiveness between whites and Indians within the community. "There are very fine people here, but the community is divided between these two groups and is sometimes violent." Community people are perceived as "basically good," but there is ongoing hostility over racial issues. There seems to be "more of a we than an I," noted one Native American. "When something happens to an Indian person, it happens to all of us." For example, many whites focus on the drunken Indian stereotype. "If an Indian gets drunk, people will say, 'Oh, there goes the drunken so-and-so,' and label the whole race. We have to represent a whole race of people because we are a minority. This is the same with the children in school."

To those interviewed, the community is split into two competing factions, directed in large part by the Native Americans' Reservation Business Committee and the white City Council. Most local decisions are reportedly made at the "coffee shop, coffee klatches and at the local gas station," but are then formalized by the Reservation Business Committee and the City Council. The general relationship between these two groups is highly negative, with long-term hostility "rooted in a power struggle." At the extremes, members of each group may think they should have control over the other, but a number of individual opinions clearly exist between the two poles. "A certain amount of racism," noted one respondent, "goes both ways around here." Both "white and Indian" people can act racist. . ."

Residents of the area may describe the community in different ways, from a "typical small town community" to a "divided biracial community," but all agree that it is

struggling economically. The largest employer in the area is the Indian reservation, including the Tribal Office and the Indian Health Services. The school is the second largest employer, but "few of its employees live in town." The third largest industry is forestry, which requires a high degree of technical training. Many of the people who work for the Forest Service come from a city quite a distance away. In addition, there is a growing wood products firm at the edge of town that employs a number of people who are not from the town. Others in the community are self-employed in the logging industry or resorts. The natural wildlife setting is a center of a tourism industry, a much needed supplement to the economic base, so that ". . . in the summer [the town] comes alive."

As a result of its location on the reservation, the city has a complicated economic structure, including both a Reservation Business Committee and a Chamber of Commerce. A number of comments were made that these two economic structures "do not cooperate as much as they could" in the economic development of the community, a dynamic that spills over into the political arena. Given these complexities, it is "easy to misunderstand local economic issues, like the tax base problem." Only eighteen percent of the land/property is taxable because of the reservation and the national forest. To make up this difference, the community receives Federal Impact Aid, a sizable contribution that benefits both Indian and non-Indian alike. The school district in particular benefits, receiving over $500,000 a year.

Even with such support, however, the people in northern Minnesota reportedly exist in a "depressed economy." "It's like it is dying." Established businesses, said to be suffering the effects of the present economic struggle, are "dying out." Because of the lack of viable businesses, the tax base is small, leaving the bulk of the tax paying to very few people. Another explanation for the sagging economy relates to individuals who earn money in town, but spend it elsewhere. One person labelled the area's economy a "bleeder economy": "It bleeds the poor for gain and displays division among the two races. . ."

Regardless of race, finding work is an issue for local residents. "Unemployment is very high; [and] it will always be that way." Underemployment is also reported to be prevalent. Further, ". . . if a poll was taken, we would find that half the people here live on welfare." Families are experiencing the effects of the high unemployment rate, and a high number--particularly among the Indian population--do receive welfare. Some mentioned that this has been know to surface socially as a way of shaming or berating people.

Socially, community members label the area "small townish" and "clannish," and people describe themselves as having a "deep feeling for the area and sticking up for it." While those interviewed said that "everybody knows everybody," there are reportedly cliques of people who stick together and a strong tendency to categorize people by family identification, length of time in the community, race, and socio-economic factors. One individual put it, "[As in a] typical small town, rumors can be rampant and damaging. There is a price to pay if you speak out against the status quo." Churches are said to be active and influential, but are experiencing decreasing attendance.

Neighborhoods, similar to those in other small towns, are "fairly split up," with people tending to stay in the community for a long time. There are federally funded home tracks; there are Indian neighborhoods; there are racially mixed, impoverished neighborhoods; and there are neighborhoods with "nicer homes." The Bingo Place is a gathering place for both "Indian and whites."

Residents and school staff describe the district climate toward education as pervasively "negative." The district is "more political and divided" than many because of the biracial composition of its population. As one person expressed his opinion, "The school expresses lower expectations for the Indian children, and therefore the behavior and performance are lower. . ." The district's Indian Education Program, providing 18 services to Native American students, has as its ultimate goal "to assist Indian students to successfully complete high school, and to encourage and prepare students to seek post-secondary training and education."

However, in the opinion of those interviewed, the school board represents competing philosophies on an appropriate support structure for the community's "at-risk" population. One part of the board appears more willing to accept the Indian culture and special programs; the other does not. ". . . There are elements in the community that resist support programs . . . [because] they misunderstand and think that Indian people don't pay taxes, which is not true." One person noted, "People treat each other with a lack of dignity and respect, particularly as it pertains to respecting race, gender, and another's ideas." Such attitudes and behavior are clearly not universal, and positive examples such as individual participation in Native American cultural events and the cooperation between tribal and school leadership in long-term planning speak to both the potential and the need for collaborative solutions. The recent development of an alternative school for returning students is seen as an important plus for Native Americans who may find its supportive learning atmosphere more conducive to their learning needs.

Generally, Native American parents are understood to be supportive of the schools, but, given the history of Indian participation in the public schools, they may choose not to be active in the system. A number of people offered two explanations for the general negative climate surrounding education in this community: racial tensions; and the boarding school experience of Native Americans from 1930-1950. Some parents or even grandparents who had a negative experience with education themselves may pass on a "fear of school." Many Indian parents reportedly "don't trust white teachers"; "they think of you as a white person and they are just Indian is a feeling you get with some of them," commented a teacher. "It is not so much the involvement, but there is a need for commitment to education to make it work." Small percentages of Indian parents are active in school, and "the ones that [sic] are do a lot of things." Several individuals commented that parents may be more willing to get involved than commonly thought, particularly if they are personally invited to participate. Parental involvement tied for first in a ranking of the district's top issues, with over half of the management team members ranking it among the top five.

Another divisive issue for the district concerns leadership roles for women, particularly following the tenure of a superintendent who was supported by many in the community, but who, in the opinion of one respondent, ". . . [pushed] anything she could push . . . and wanted to just move in here and take over without understanding [us]." Since the arrival of her replacement, one individual notes, supporters of the former superintendent". . . won't let him be boss." There are reportedly people on the board and in the administration who now have increased resistance to women as authority figures, considering them "women's libbers" and identifying them as a destructive element in the district. One group of women brought formal charges against the board and the current administration.

People interviewed report in-fighting between factions in the community and the school. Certain groups are seen as more involved, but in general those most involved are labeled "reactionary," fostering an atmosphere of "distrust and miscommunication." Mentioned specifically was a group that represents a vocal minority comprising primarily retired teachers and people on fixed incomes who are concerned about taxes and a shift of the Indian population back to the reservation. This group is pushing a back-to-basics curriculum and, not understanding its financing, opposing "extra" support programs like the Area Learning Center.

Documentation shows that four of the five groups involved in strategic planning for the district considered "lack of community unity" and the "presence of biracial tensions" as major weaknesses in the district. They also identified the image and reputation of the community as weaknesses. Despite this, the school operates in some people's minds as the hub of the town, which is proudly associated with sports teams and music. As one individual commented, "I don't think that the community would be if the school was not here." Another noted, " The school is the [second] . . . biggest employer, and the community would close down if it was not here."

II. Change

The physical and cultural presence of the forest and reservation necessarily contributes to the identity of the local school district, and to a number of issues facing the community. There is a high alcoholism rate and, comparatively, a high crime rate. (The same number of murders per capita occur here as in Minneapolis.) Like towns across the state, this town is experiencing changing family structures. Respondents listed poverty, chemical dependency, single parent homes and teen parents, lack of recreational activities, high unemployment, and a lack of economic development as community problems. Four issues specific to the Indian community were listed: lack of access to the reservation; the difficulties of biracial governing bodies; the sense that the Indian clan is "breaking down"; and the decline of the native language, causing breaks between the elders and the young.

Within the district, positive changes have occurred in the areas of attendance and academic achievement, but, in the opinions of those interviewed, negative changes have provided continuing challenges. Administrative turnover is one such change: "There's been chaos from the top." At one building there have been questions about whether "we try a short-term solution . . . or build a new facility." Some note that district decision-making has changed dramatically in recent years. At issue is the notion of a team approach to administration, a concept that the superintendent and a majority of the school board seemingly find to be inappropriate for the district at this time. "We just made a complete switch. We went from 100% participatory management style to more of a traditional, hierarchical structure. We no longer have a district management team like we used to." In the words of one staff member, the superintendent "bases his decisions on some of the board members' ideas. . . We don't get the feedback we need, and he does not take the feedback we need to give to the school board."

In the opinions of many of those interviewed, the superintendent and board are not making decisions on a "practical" level, and some therefore feel that participatory management is needed. As one individual commented, "In a biracial community I think that traditional style can be very damaging because of the power struggle and control issues. In the Indian community, there is not the feeling that one individual wants all the power. It is more a family style decision-making effort."

On a more specific level, school staff discussed effective ways to approach Indian children so teachers are not seen as strong authority figures. "You have to reach out a lot more against that history of mistrust of the white people." "Indian students need a different, more personalized education that supports them . . .," and the Indian culture needs less structure, less competition, and more individualized instruction. Some see outcome based education as an innovation that will boost the Indian population's ability to perform in the existing educational system. "I think with OBE we are going to see some real turns in the Indian population. OBE is a better fit to the Indian values and way of life than what we are currently doing. If they experience it in school, they will carry on with it." People also support the OBE approach in that parents take ownership in their children's educational success and engage in a continuous reporting process.

The problem with OBE reportedly lies in its implementation. People "just don't know what it is about yet." "It is not clear to me yet. . .". Grading will be difficult, and some feel it may be impossible to change "our calendar-driven model of education." "OEL expects too much in too short of time. They have provided very little leadership." Some question the notion of state level requirements, while others feel that OEL has been "top-down rather than generated by the people," i.e., passed down from the state to the administrators and from the administrators to the teachers. The teachers interviewed feel "left out for the most part" and sense that the state is "fumbling like we are fumbling trying to get this thing." Others see a need for results and "statistics" to support the program. Those interviewed mentioned three factors affecting the implementation

process in the district: the need for more time; the challenge of truly individualizing instruction; and the lack of formal assessment procedures.

Many expressed concern that support for the OEL project may run dry at the end of the grant. "Your legislature has to do some real long range planning when they want to institute an idea and then give the money that it takes to truly implement it and to truly pilot that program fairly. If you don't, it is just a big waste of money." "What hurts a lot is that OEL always wants us to do all these grandiose things and then [will] cut the money off in two years, and you can't expect a traditional system to change in two years."

Staff members suggested a number of issues for future improvement of the district. "More Indian teachers and administration are a must." Many would like to see a new school that incorporates the culture of the area into the facility and meaningfully involves parents in their children's education. Some mention a desire to continue with OBE, specifically by raising student expectations. Others want to "participate in the technology age." Some also propose that the staff be more involved in self examination of prejudices. "This is not a population a teacher should be working with if they have those types [i.e., negative] of attitudes." One person proposed a better "matching/hiring process" to get teachers who can work with this population," suggesting also that colleges of education sponsor partnerships and ongoing in-service training.

In summary, there can be no doubt that the challenges facing this district are monumental. However, the people from the community who were interviewed provide hope for the future, acknowledging that change is both slow and difficult. There is still the sense of a small town, a whole community that can pull together when called upon. "We are in a high change time with a real sense of optimism." As noted earlier, many mentioned that for the most part "people are friendly, and everybody waves." Observations clearly show a number of examples of caring people who want the best for the community but, they may differ on how that goal is to be reached. In some cases, there appears to be insufficient understanding of cultural differences that influence factors affecting change. However, as one person put it, "We in [this city] like a good fight, yet we can work together."

CASE STUDY REPORT 10

I. Site Description

This is a large metropolitan district whose student population has changed dramatically in the past 17 years. The minority population has soared from 16% in 1972 to 50% in 1989, largely due to an influx of children of color from outside the state. This demographic change has created ongoing challenges for district personnel. As one person put it, ". . . our system is [not] bad because we can do well if not better than others. But the district does not deal with immigration and the poor." There is recognition in the district that societal forces in the community "impact our children, our way of life, and . . . have serious implications for our future as a nation."

People who were interviewed mentioned an "ever widening academic diversity" in the district, with "some kindergarten kids barely talking, while others are reading," a gap that continues to grow through high school. The effects of poverty are seen in behavior problems that may erupt in school, as are the effects of drugs, gang activity, and teen-age pregnancies. "There are larger amounts of time and effort devoted to behavior and other concerns that kids bring with them. . . The energy being spent is enormous." One respondent noted, "As a society we do not realize the enormity of the problem of the future of our kids. We do not realize that we have kids that are hungry, that we have kids who are crack babies." Some reported a "growing rift" between schools and a large number of families in the community with special needs, many of whom are unlikely to go to social service agencies for help or referrals.

Although the district is working to "bridge the chasm of diversity," in the opinions of those interviewed results to date have only begun to address the problems. As one parent noted, "I see the problem as more than between the haves and have nots. People may have the same problems, but complicated by color. Our district is desegregated, but not integrated." Rapid changes in demographics have minority people entering the community "in numbers that white folks are not used to." Many reportedly feel that people coming into the community are "less prepared either for jobs or schooling," and they also "have greater social needs." Teachers who have been successful over the years may now, with the change in the student population, be less successful as they would like to be, and they are frustrated. "Things that used to work are not working," and the tendency is to "blame the kids."

There are growing concerns reported in the African American community that the school system is not meeting the needs of their children: "The school system does not know how to reach out to African American kids." Another individual commented, "We need to acknowledge . . . that the educational system is not well prepared to deal with the large influx of people of color into the school system." As the Southeast Asian community is also growing rapidly, some perceive an increasing conflict between the Asian American and African American communities. A few people sensed that instructional electives could provide multicultural content, but that such offerings would be "the first to go" if budgets were cut. "We need a firm commitment to bring [an] intercultural curriculum, rather than the white European curriculum."

Those interviewed also point to the role that the business community and major corporations can play in educating the children, because "it is these children who will be the workforce of tomorrow." As the workforce becomes increasingly minority, "we will have to learn how to live with those different learning styles of those minority groups--Native American, African American, Hispanic American." Education cannot become "an island." Noting that today's graduates often require on-the-job training and retraining, community respondents reported that they would like to share with the school system the responsibility of "preparing city youth for employment in the city."

II. Change

One person stated the district's charge clearly: "We need to act immediately to nurture the future of our young children." The school system must demonstrate that all kinds of children can "participate and succeed." "Students should not be made to feel that the odds are stacked against them," either because they come from a certain family background or belong to a given ethnic or racial group. The future school system has to be prepared to "accept kids wherever they are at as a starting point and succeed with them."

However, as one educator noted, "We see the school system in a dilemma at present--and this dilemma is caused by the need for stability and, at the same time, the need for major transformation." Those interviewed suggested that the school system needs "basic structural changes" and that "incremental change is not going to do it." But the reality is that "there is nothing in place that can deal with the magnitude of the difficulty that the school system is facing." The issues go well beyond the school system, and the problems are seen as symptoms of things happening in the broader community. For example, one member of the business community cited questioned the adequacy of the vocational education curriculum to prepare students for the job market. For this person, vocational and technical education needs to be "considered as a career ladder offering opportunities at different levels." Another person cited the need for immediate working agreements connecting social service agencies and the schools.

Poised as the district is between the need for stability and the need for change, respondents agree that careful planning is needed, but there is little agreement on how to go about the transformation. One person noted, "We must avoid the need to allay people's fears by expending our energies in little innovative programs," noting that this strategy could prove dangerous because it drains off the few resources there are and serves to justify people saying, "We have tried that, we have taken care of restructuring." Another agreed that strategies should be avoided that allow for "small pockets of exciting things to happen" such as choice or magnet programs. Since district restructuring, some parents perceived that certain magnet schools are identified as superior, when "actually they are no different." Alternatives add to the dilemma because "parents don't know how to choose," and the so-called "brain drain" may encourage student leadership to attend magnet programs. There is the sense that some schools are losing to magnet schools perceived to be the "best." These programs are "to appease the parents who are the most vocal and upset with the school system." If the district caters to small groups of people who are very vocal and gives them what they want, "We are likely to be left with a poor public school system." Others felt that by responding to "anybody vocal" or anybody "pushing the system to change," "the people who have the greatest needs are not heard." The vocal opposition can be made happy, but the district will not have changed the major things that are wrong in the educational system for the largest number of students.

The programs submitted under the Office of Educational Leadership grant represent two special programs within the district, one for elementary and the other for middle grades children. Those interviewed at the elementary site noted that many behavior and social problems can be helped by "teaching the kids problem-solving, integrating social skills with life, and starting intervention early." Currently there is a lack of funding for intervention pilots in the district. One person reported, "Beyond the fourth grade, there is nothing." This program marks an early intervention in the lives of children at risk. The middle grades site is a newly conceived school "where the rubber meets the road." There are reported "misunderstandings with change" and "never enough time and money." Working collaboratively, parents, members of the business community, and staff know that "changes need to be made and things have to happen": "If [something] doesn't work, you try something else." The program is "evolving as we go." "We can't wait for a lot of studies that will tell us what to do. We can't wait to start changing until we have figured it out. But it is scary taking the plunge."

CASE STUDY REPORT 11

I. Site Description

This secondary school is part of a paired school district serving 315 students from four small communities in greater Minnesota. A report completed in the spring of 1988 concluded that the outlook on the town's economic future is "relatively optimistic." A school board member noted that the "business community has had it ups and downs. The community is pretty good in the areas of small businesses and services, but lacking in businesses that might bring in more jobs." Over the years, the number of families earning their livelihoods from farming has decreased, while the scale of existing farm operations has increased. A number of residents work in larger, nearby towns, but prefer to live and raise their children in this town. A central issue confronting the community today involves its willingness and ability to cope with difficult financial circumstances.

Conversations with teachers and school board members suggest that the school represents an important aspect of the community's identity. As one community member put it, "This school is a hub of the community. It brings people together for school events. . . It concerns me that if we don't have quality education here, we won't have a school here. And if you don't have a school, you basically don't have a community anymore."

Historically, community residents have shown strong support for the school. Attendance at school-sponsored events is high, and a number of respondents noted that finding parents willing to volunteer their time for task forces and committee work has never been a problem. A school board member remarked that the town "is proud of the fact that it hasn't [often] needed to levy excess taxes." This individual felt that the school board has operated within a long tradition of fiscal conservatism. There was a general consensus that the school is doing a good job of educating its students. A number of people expressed pride in the caliber of their young people and noted, "Our students are very well rounded" and "well prepared for college." There was general agreement from students that the school was "pretty friendly" and that "everybody knows everybody" at the school.

For the most part, the students' criticism of the school focused on its regulatory and disciplinary policies and the attitude toward students implied by those policies. During a group discussion with several students, one student characterized the school as a place with "strict rules and constant supervision" and wondered "How are we going to be able to handle freedom in college, where there are no rules?" There seemed to be consensus among these students that they would like to see a "less third-gradish" and "more college-like atmosphere" at the school. This view may not be universal. As one adult put it: " The principal has been criticized for being too strict. I don't think the teachers are critical. They like the fact that they don't have to waste their teaching time dealing with discipline problems." Many of the students attended schools located in other communities before they came here, and teachers seem well aware of the community-based differences in attitudes toward school discipline students bring with them. As one teacher explained: "In the eyes of one town, our rules are very strict. Then we were paired with another town whose attitude toward us is, 'God, don't you do anything to discipline these kids?'"

The school building consists of a 1931 post and beam, two-story, brick building with a 1974 addition. Observations of the school confirmed that the building and grounds are well-maintained. However, a few individuals commented that maintaining the building in good order may become more

difficult in the coming years. Some observers believe that it may be necessary to build a new school in order to provide an adequate educational environment for the districts' students.

The school's faculty members are encouraged to take part in staff and curriculum development activities. The principal reported that there are now more opportunities available through the district, and more financial support for staff development. The school's faculty members appear to have a generally good working relationship with one another and with the school board. The principal believes that participation on the school's MEEP team has helped to promote togetherness and camaraderie. The school has moved toward decision-making processes that emphasize collaboration between and among the school's "stakeholders." There appears to be a shared sense of purpose among these stakeholders to provide the best possible education for students.

II. Change

This school's readiness for change is most clearly evidenced in three areas: the community's attitude toward the school; staff member's interest in participating in professional and curriculum development activities; and the school's stance regarding technological change. A 1988 analysis of the resources of the school indicated that the community's adaptation to the new organizational arrangement between districts (pairing and sharing) has gone well. As one teacher commented: "We've had to get along with faculty from other districts after 20 years of being independent. . . Pairing and Sharing has brought variety and stimulation into this school. Anything negative has been of less importance." Effective communication between the school and the community has probably played an important part in the community's adaptation to school-related change. A teacher commented that the school does a good job of communicating with the public. "There is as much information available as you want to read. [The principal] has set up an information line to help people learn about various school activities." The principal believes the "pairing has also had an impact. It has brought new people in, taken some out, moved others to new places." "The school board has been supportive of teachers. The MEEP program is not inexpensive, but the board has been willing to support it."

The school's principal estimated that five years ago there were no more than eight computers at the school. Today, there are more than one hundred. The principal is optimistic and enthusiastic about putting high technology to work in the school. He would like students to have computer access to the region's state university. "In reality, I would like to think the economy will improve so that we can buy a reasonable amount of technology for the school. . . Physics teachers have gone to video simulation of physics experiments. You may not have the resources to do the experiments, but with the right video disks, students can still have the experience." The principal noted that steps were being taken within the district to arrange better prices, discounts, and grants for schools wanting to acquire new equipment. One school board member commented that computer technology is likely to have the "biggest impact on the school in the future." The principal anticipates that the board will be supportive of the school's attempt to secure additional technology through grant writing and direct investment.

Recently, the community and school board have been confronted with an unanticipated and difficult challenge. As one individual described it: ". . . last fall, we passed an excess levy referendum and gave the community what was thought to be accurate information. That information proved to be off by about 500%. A group of people organized a recall vote on the levy, and they ousted the chair of the school board." After many years of stability in school board

leadership, an influential group of community members reacted swiftly and emphatically to perceived inadequacies. Board members admit that they were taken by surprise by their critics' quick response. They regret not having had enough time to present their side of the story to the public. Several individuals expressed concern about the impact this event might have on the communities with which it is paired. One person feared that the event might directly interfere with the consolidation process noting that: " a nearby town pays more taxes than we did even with the tax referendum. They are going to look at us and wonder, do we really want to enter into consolidation with this community? Do they really support education?"

When addressing the school's future, people focused on three common themes: consolidation efforts; the impact of enrollment options; and outcome based education. Those interviewed often expressed the idea that effective consolidation will be essential to the school's continued existence within the community. All of those who spoke about consolidation viewed it as a strategy that had benefitted the school's faculty and students in the past. Most of these individuals seemed to assume that consolidation efforts would continue to benefit the school in the future.

Respondents were well aware of the competitive climate now enveloping Minnesota schools and school districts. A teacher reported that the parents of an excellent math student plan to send their child to the local university if the school has to cut its mathematics curriculum. A school board member expressed concern about the fact that the school's competitors "have a better ability to lobby the legislature. Everybody is after the dollar."

The schools' initial involvement with outcome based education has begun. Those teachers most interested in pursuing their interest in OBE will develop a small number of demonstration classes. Most of the teachers interviewed had some familiarity with OBE's basic premises. "OBE will catch those students who are not getting the education they deserve. Kids at the top are not being challenged. OBE will allow us to do a better job with kids toward the bottom and the top. If you can determine outcomes then assess them, you can keep students from getting bored."

Teachers who were interviewed seemed interested in learning more about outcome based education. Some felt they knew about the general ideas behind it, but did not yet have a good understanding of how it would be implemented in the classroom. "A lot of the basic structure is already there. . . The only thing we don't do is go through the cycle of retesting, reinforcement, or enrichment. What I am not clear about has to do with assessing outcomes and how to include retaking and reteaching within the structure." Another person commented: "The only problem I see with it [OBE] is the logistics of it, how to manage it. I can't find anyone who can tell me how it works. " Other concerns expressed by teachers focused on the emotional needs of the students. They are concerned about "rushing" students too quickly through school. What would be the impact on their emotional development? As one teacher put it: "OBE's weakness is that it doesn't look at the emotional needs of students as we move into the 90's."

The principal views the school's prospects for implementing OBE with guarded optimism: "There are always going to be parents who are very conservative. Parents will be upset that we are experimenting with their kids. . . There have been few complaints so far, but I anticipate that there will be more. I am also anxious about how the other teachers will receive this [OBE approach]." A teacher argued that it will be important to involve community members in the process of introducing OBE to the school. This might mean "having parent or parent/teacher groups judge the effectiveness of OBE, or just educating parents, convincing them that this is a good thing."

CASE STUDY REPORT 12

I. Site Description

This high school is located in a district that has changed from a traditional rural community to one housing many daily commuters to the Twin Cities, a community with "suburban possibilities." One person described it as a "unique rural setting without a [sizeable] farm population. It is slowly filling up with houses on two acre lots and no agriculture." While the community sees itself as supportive of the local school district, some report that not all factions give education a high priority, and, as a result, "we are not able to support a school to the degree we would like." In the words of one community member, some individuals "never want to spend money on school, just get by." Another said, "[Many people] are satisfied in getting an average high school education and oppose educational system improvement. . . They aren't aware of what we are trying to do." Those interviewed sensed that support for schooling came largely from middle class community members, with blue collar workers and farmers seen as less supportive.

The high school recently changed administrators, and teachers cite improvement in relationships between the faculty and the administration. "[It is] easier for me to talk to administrators about my problems. . . This administration places classroom instruction as the most important thing in school. Everything else is secondary. We feel we have more support to do what we have to do. We don't have many problems with discipline." Those interviewed expressed satisfaction with the way decisions are made at the school. "For the most part we are trusted to make decisions. We find little interference from the administration if we go through the right channels . . . We have decision-making power. The principal trusts us to make decisions." The one exception to this was over the issue of remodeling a portion of the building; although teachers gave input, many felt it was largely ignored.

Working relationships between members of the faculty were called "positive." One teacher suggested, "I am new as a teacher, and I am really impressed. It's nice, cooperative. Everybody helps everybody else." Another said, "Some other buildings have cliques. This one does not." With nine days of in-service training per year, "We are encouraged to get additional training. Additional credits are rewarded by the pay schedule."

Not all about the school, however, is positive. One person noted that the drop-out rate continues to grow, but there is the feeling that "nothing that can be done about it" under the present system. The teachers see themselves as "overworked," and some sense this has an impact on the success of their students. "As class size is getting bigger, you don't get around to all the students." "Too many students, too much of a mixture, not enough time to see the students. Our paperwork takes so much time away from the classroom." For some this has led to concern about the school's graduates: "[The students] are probably not as prepared as I want them to be for the real world. The graduates are happy to get out of here. . . They want to make a lot of money, but don't want to work too hard." Another teacher was concerned about "the lack of ability to take responsibility for their own actions." A school board member put it this way: "Many of them have short-sighted goals, like work and drive a car. We don't have as many who go to college as we would like to have."

II. Change

People who were interviewed noted that the faculty has responded well to recent changes (e.g., the new administration) and sense that prospects for OBE at the school are good. There is a confidence that this school is receptive to change. OBE is a "great change, one that has a lot of promise." Some teachers have been to workshops and see how they can use the outcomes in their classes. For some it doesn't seem far different from their current

practice: "In any kind of writing assignment I set outcomes and ask students to achieve beyond minimum standards . . . I haven't taken the official curriculum as OEL wants, but in a subtle way it is being practiced." One of the desirable outcomes of implementing OBE would be "to raise the expectations of students by coming up with a way to have a more positive community-school relationship. If we have better community-school relationships, parents will know we are really concerned about the students' learning."

Concern was expressed, however, about the driving force for the change being "top down, from the Department of Education and the State Legislature" and about how exactly to implement the program. As one teacher put it: "[It's a] wonderful idea. The concept is excellent. But I worry about the logistics of it and worry about how well we can be trained for it." Another teacher suggested: "I don't think it is just another program. . . Sometimes new things are the same as old things, and some think this is a new name for an old thing [but it's not.] Some confuse this with individualized instruction."

Among those interviewed, there was the sense that if OBE is successfully implemented, it will gain acceptance. "OBE may be best combined with cooperative learning . . . We are able to achieve the desired outcomes by having students work together. If proven successful to teachers, then I believe that teachers will begin to accept and use it. Then we will see more grass roots support for the program. It is important that we make believers of teachers to think it is a good program."

CASE STUDY REPORT 13

I. Site Description

This is a small high school, in fact, one of the smallest in the state. Fourteen teachers work with 180 students in grades 7-12. Size and familiarity influence the culture and climate of the building considerably. Discipline is not reported as much of a problem, and staff and students give the impression of being happy to be in school. Relations among groups in the building are very positive and are among the school's greatest strengths. Student-staff relationships are described as caring; teachers spend six years with essentially the same group of students in their classrooms. Responsible behavior and applying oneself are repeatedly expressed as values teachers look for in their students.

The teachers lead a busy and "stretched" work life. Most have five or six preparations, plus extra curricular activities. Relations between teachers appear good, and teachers feel that the staff is an open minded, committed group willing to try new ideas. Relations between the teachers and the administration also appear good. A consultative model of decision-making seems to prevail, and teachers expressed satisfaction with this format. It is uniformly acknowledged that the principal sets the agenda and has the final say, but at this point teachers feel that their individual positions have been respected and accommodated.

II. Change

The district's OBE program involves new demands on both students and teachers. At the high school, many of the changes already implemented are those affecting students. Developing and linking specific learner outcomes for all curriculum areas have been a priority of the staff to date. Outcomes are being mapped backwards, from graduation outcomes on down to the first grade. The school plans to use the outcomes to assess students' ability and readiness to progress. Raising expectations for students and requiring them to be more responsible for learning is an OBE goal discussed at the high school. The school has eliminated F's and has replaced them with Incompletes, requiring students to satisfactorily complete assigned work in order to progress or graduate. There has been further discussion of having only three grades--A, B and Incomplete--in order to require a higher level of learning. Moving away from grades is a goal of the principal, a goal supported by many teachers and some parents.

This school serves students with a wide range of abilities, and one frequently expressed belief is that school work is too geared for unmotivated learners. Consequently, much of the discussion about individualizing learning opportunities includes finding ways to keep all students, but especially bright students, involved in learning.

As the staff of a small school, the teachers are particularly sensitive to the frustrations of being "judged" by numbers only. They speak with a sense of hope that assessment relying on grades and other numerical judgments will decline in favor of feedback that is both more personal and more useful.

Most of the teachers interviewed felt positively about OBE, but concerns were expressed along the following lines:

- Reservations about faddish, "magic pill" reform;
- Concerns about time and money;
- Anxiety that the OEL will withdraw support;
- Anxiety that the legislature will close the school regardless of improvement;

- Less willingness of some older teachers to change.

There is extensive staff development at the high school. The aims of staff development include alternative teaching practices which involve a major shift away from lecturing and towards more student initiated activity in the classroom. The alternative models suggested present teachers with the challenge of becoming learning resources and learning managers, rather than presenters of information to a whole group. It is a demanding shift, and some teachers feel a little leery and overwhelmed by it. It is hoped that improved distribution of teachers' time (less paper and pencil work), practice working with individual students, group work, student peer coaching, more classroom aides and/or student teachers, and other changes will help the staff make the shift.

CASE STUDY REPORT 14

I. Site Description

"A large number of our students are hit with a large dose of reality before they get out of bed in the morning," noted one teacher at this greater Minnesota secondary school where 550 of a student population of 810 are Native Americans. Over 500 of these students are more than one quarter Indian which "means their cultural ties are important." Those interviewed indicate that the high percentage of minority students appears to "magnify problems" like alcoholism, chemical abuse, and poverty. Sixty-four per cent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunches. Many Indian children are reported to be in special education and eventually "stigmatized" with that label. In addition, staff point to a number of students who have "very low self esteem." The district dropout rate, while greatly improved, remains a major concern. The student body has "all the special needs possible" except the mentally handicapped. At the same time, teachers report, "We have a lot of bright students."

The school staff has a total of 67 employees of whom 12 are Native Americans (four are part-time aides; five are full-time aides, two are service workers and one is a teacher). In a school system where students are 69% Native American, only 18% of the employees and only 3% of the academic teaching staff are Native American. At least one person interviewed explained that this is due to the fact that licensed Native American teachers are impossible to find. However, unlicensed staff are also disproportionately white with only 39% Native American.

Four of five groups consulted as part of a recent strategic planning effort identified staff-student relationships as a major strength of the district. Because the school staff is mature, they know the student body well and are reportedly "effective." Counselors, including one who is trained in chemical dependency, are available for students and their parents at any time to help them understand themselves, their school performance and aptitudes, and to help with vocational, educational, and personal issues in confidence. "The teachers really care, and they are the best people. . .," noted one respondent, who described relationships as "close" and the quality of teaching "high."

If the teaching staff is a strength of the school, those interviewed see its physical plant as a weakness, affecting staff morale negatively. Teachers carry large class loads and report a lack of space, "which is half the battle of the discipline problem." The high school facility is in "terrible shape," and "we need smaller class size to nurture high school students." A recent bond election flyer identified a long list of physical problems at the high school, including the lack of a cafeteria, the overcrowding of students (some attend classes in rental buildings across the street), a computer lab with room for only 18 students, and buildings with areas that do not meet fire codes.

A second area of concern for the school is its curriculum, identified as a "major weakness" by groups participating in strategic planning for the district. They were disturbed by its "depth and breadth" and by scheduling conflicts. Amid a "back-to-basics pressure," the curriculum is starting its five year review process. Members of the school management team ranked "keeping up, being relevant, technologically up to date, and at the same time educationally sound" as concerns. A new course on tribal culture has been added to the curriculum, but, in addition to the standard offerings, a number of different courses were suggested: German, physics, band, auto mechanics, a gifted program, and "Indian studies". Further, individuals in interviews proposed the following topics: social skill development; independent life skills; conflict resolution; decision-making; peer pressure; and study skills.

A third area of concern relates to the "minority majority" population of the school and relations between whites and Native Americans. Diversity of the student body is seen as a strength; "we are fortunate to have two cultures represented here." School staff are

working hard to meet Indian educational needs, and many see Indian cultural program opportunities as a strength. In addition, "we are looking into a lot of programs for special support," and there is a willingness to explore resources for extra help. However, the ongoing racial tension in the community fosters what one person labeled "institutional racism" in the school. Some commented on the need for Native American role models for students. Available data on grading and enrollment patterns, suspensions, and participation in activities may raise questions for the school community:

-Grades/enrollment. Indian students' grade point averages are lower than whites in all grades, with the average Indian grades at C/C+ as compared to white students' B-/B. The greatest gap is on the A honor role where no Native Americans appeared in grades 10 and 11, and fewer than twenty five per cent in grade 12. College preparatory classes have two to three times more white enrollment than Native American.

-Suspensions. Documentation shows that in grades 7-9 Native Americans receive most of the in- and after-school suspensions. In 10th grade Indian and non-Indian rates were similar; In 11th grade more non-Indians got suspension; and in 12th the Indian rate was triple the white rate. Out of school suspensions were received almost exclusively by Native Americans in grades 7-11; in grade 12 the number of Indian/non-Indian suspensions was equal. Overall, the number of Indian students receiving any type of suspension was two and a half to 11 times as high as that for the white students. One respondent noted, "A lot of our Indian boys . . . raise themselves and have a very different understanding of authority. Some people take that as disrespect, but it is not; it is survival."

-Sports and extra-curricular activities. Close to seventy per cent of the participants in six activities (boys' basketball and wrestling, student council, Students Against Drunk Driving, peer helpers, and auto mechanics) are Native American, reflecting the community's make-up. In seventeen other sports and extra-curricular activities, however, white participants are more numerous; in two others--Drum Group and Indian Club--there are only Native American participants.

In its ongoing operation, the school engages in site-based management. The principal makes some everyday decisions, but decision-making is mostly a "collaborative effort." Ten people "basically whoever chooses to run" are elected by the staff, and the site management team then makes all major decisions with input from other staff and a single student representative. Because the staff has input in the decision-making, they report satisfaction with the process; by and large, this participatory management style is "comfortable."

II. Change

The school has had administrative turnover in the position of principal, and this was mentioned as a source of "chaos" over time. Lack of administrative continuity was seen as a contributing factor to the fear of change. Combined with a recent change of district leadership and resultant shift in decision-making, a sense of constant change and required adaptation is expressed by the faculty and staff. "The high school staff is more fragmented, [although] there are [smaller] groups that relate and are willing to help each other." The smaller self-contained units appear to share a close common bond, but people report a natural split between "commuter teachers and community teachers." "We have respect and cooperation," notes one staff member, "but there is room for improvement."

Some people interviewed, acknowledged potential "stagnation" due to much of the staff's long tenure with the district. "I can see the weakness of the staff on the curriculum and instruction end of teaching." Because of the seniority of the staff, people may not be as in tune to latest trends as new teachers and may, therefore, be less innovative. "We have a mature staff, which means we need more in-services to update them. Because they are older, they are less likely to accept change, and [they may] resist things like OBE."

"People here are scared of change." "We need to be more tolerant of people's views and [have] a willingness to look at change, [to see] that change may be necessary."

People report specific concerns about OBE and its implementation. There is, first, a lack of understanding of the concept itself. Second, there are concerns that while the staff and building administrators support OBE, there is little support district wide, particularly from the superintendent and the school board. Finally, there are concerns that OBE is "just another educational phase that will come and go."

CASE STUDY REPORT 15

I. Site Description

This high school is located in a "conservative, established town" which is described as "very poor" and "not open to change." The teachers interviewed are not in agreement on their position in the community, one noting that teachers have a negative identification, another saying that teachers are respected. The basis for the negative reaction was attributed to the low wages generally paid to local workers ("few employers pay the national wage scale") with the result that teachers who earn $40,000 per year are considered "rich."

Relations between the school and community appear largely contingent on communication. While some taxpayers seem "almost fearful that athletics gets too much," others note that there are "good relations in programs where parents can come in and talk." Many of the school problems are attributed to the decline of the family, increasing numbers of single-parent families, and chemical abuse. Another source of concern is that many parents do not have high expectations for the students, assuming that they will be going to work in the local factories for the rest of their lives. Conversely, there is concern expressed by parents of high achieving students that trends toward cooperative learning and other curricular changes will affect their child's ability to succeed by decreasing the relationship that students have with the school. One teacher said that parents may be "shortsighted" about their student's progress. A staff member related that one parent called in May to ask what a student could do in the last two weeks of school to raise the grade high enough to graduate this year. A concerted effort is made to reach the community through a community "Dialog," an annual conference open to the public in which people discuss school issues in small groups. While attendance has been disappointing in recent years, the participation of students in the "Dialog" was seen as promising.

Some of the students are seen as "extremely dedicated." However, a measure of the problems faced by others is the number of programs available in the school including ". . . the teenage pregnancy group, Project Hope, and special ed, which have grown by leaps and bounds."

II. Change

There are both optimists and cynics on this staff. There are people who have been "burned" in the past by "jumping into things before pieces are in place," only to have the program disappear for lack of long-term planning and funding. There are also those who have employed some of the principles of outcome based education and have been encouraged by the results.

Among the concerns expressed were that there are many older individuals on the present faculty who are resistant to change. The expectation is that three-fourths of the staff will retire within ten years. This is seen as positive by some who look forward to a younger staff, however, this hope is tempered by recent experiences with unqualified student teachers from the area university. "I don't think the staff will be as good as what we have here. Look at the high school level, what are we trying to achieve? When they get out of here, can they read, write?" In addition, some staff are concerned by the fact that in an attempt to hold down costs, the district has been hiring older people without masters degrees. Symptomatic of the reaction to change has been the reception of the new principal. Although a ten year vetran principal of another school in the district, the strategies

employed early in the year to encourage staff decision-making were perceived as weakness, as lacking the ability to make decisions.

There are varying opinions on the OBE program, ranging from those who have heard about its implementation in another school, to one "convert " who attended a cabinet meeting; "went in as devil's advocate, saw value and started using it . . ." The sources of information on the program range from professional journals to rumors, but most agree that there has not been sufficient follow-up to communication. Some said they had been using OBE concepts "a little," putting grades in pencil, and seeing improvement. OBE is perceived as "more teacher-teacher, not hierarchical. The mastery model is more work, but it gives kids more opportunities for success. But it doesn't work well with the present school schedule." The concern with application includes road blocks in the form of finances and support; "I doubt the main office realizes the amount of assistance they need."

A major concern is how the new minimum standards will be drafted for the learning disabled. Teachers say they have not seen plans for this group and that the correctives designed to help a student pass may turn out to be a labeling process. There is a concern about those who cannot be reached by this process. "You up the percentage that make it, . . .but you still have those that don't have the ability."

Communication is the important element in approaching change in this community. The inability to effectively reach people has been and will continue to be a major obstacle. At present the faculty is divided by their experience as teachers, by their individual career goals, and by the physical obstacle of departmentalization. The school community is also separated from many of the people in the community by economic status and by lifestyle. There has been a continuing effort to reach the public through the "Dialog" program, but it has met with little success as turnouts are not large. At the "Dialog" held this school year people were divided into small groups to discuss what they wanted from outcome based education. The discussions resulted in a number of points which were transmitted to the district administration for use in planning. A concern of the staff involved in the "Dialogs" has been the inability to involve community members from lower income groups.

This is a divided school in many ways: its physical structure; relationships within the building; and relationships with the non-educational community. These factors may make the development of collaborative learning and empowerment of students difficult. Most students with special needs are mainstreamed into classes led by teaching teams, and to the outside observer they are indistinguishable from the "regular class" student. This effect is no doubt the mark of a teaching team enthusiastic and optimistic about its mission. The success they achieve in reaching learner goals may perhaps be used as an example of cooperation and collaborative teaching to other members of the staff.

Some teachers are already "believers" in OBE. They have tried to make time for tutorials and modification of programs. Others are more skeptical. "You can't convince me that ten years from now I'm going to get a kid that knows more [of the subject] . . ." Still another teacher commented: "How willing are teachers going to be to change? Teaching modes are outdated here, standards are down. How do we redirect, refocus to get back up to where they were, why did we start to bring them down in the first place?" An optimistic view is that the "curriculum probably will all look different, more in tune with needs. I hope there's built-in flexibility to accommodate change, greater use of community resources."

CASE STUDY REPORT 16

I. Site Description

Serving two distinct communities, this high school houses approximately 1,100 students in grades 9 to 12, roughly 80% of whom are bussed from outlying areas. After graduation about 40% go into the work force or the military, with the remainder going on to higher education either at a two-year technical school or a college.

Although students are described as "well behaved," faculty and staff who were interviewed expressed concern about recent changes they see in the student population. These reported changes relate to three areas: home environments; students' attitude; and peer interactions. In contrast to past students, about 20% of students do not live at home, many have cars, and, while certain students are "very unsure of themselves," many appear extremely independent. In the opinion of those interviewed, drinking problems are "commonplace." Teachers mentioned the need to "entertain students" who may hold part-time jobs and have little time for homework. Some sensed that students "lack commitment and the work ethic," giving up too easily when they study challenging material. One teacher worried that many "badly prepared" students believe they are prepared for the future when, in fact, they are not. On the topic of peer interaction, students were labelled "more competitive" than in the past, with cheating an acceptable "option" for a majority of students.

There was a sense that the gap between achievers and non-achievers is widening, and some teachers are worried about "spoon-feeding" certain students, having to repeat details over and over. One teacher put it bluntly, noting that "more of . . . [his] time is spent on discipline problems than on learning and instruction." There was also frustration expressed that building administrators spend very little time with the students, although on their part some administrators estimated that they spend 75% of their time on discipline problems. While teachers are trusted to make decisions about instructional needs, at the same time they report frustration at the lack of "respect and recognition" they receive from students and the community.

Middle school teachers report that sometimes the competition in high school is too much and the environment too subject-oriented for students to make an easy transition. Academically, middle school staff feel students are well prepared for high school, but gaps in achievement are blamed on academic preparation at the middle schools. Some students also have difficulty making the transition from a local middle school to this high school in another community, reporting they are ostracized for being "different."

High school staff suggested that in general parents are "very supportive" of the school, many coming to conferences or volunteering for school activities. However, there was concern expressed by some that the majority of support is for "athletic competition," rather than for academic matters and a sense that some parents express their concern about education by calling teachers, administrators, and board members directly. For their part, the parents interviewed expressed concern about discipline problems and the presence of "bad kids" who they perceived to come largely from one of the two communities in the district. Some parents were also concerned that their children "don't really know [what it means to] work."

II. Change

In recent years, the development of a regional Area Learning Center (ALC) and middle schools in the district has provided an impetus for change. The contribution of the ALC is "solid for many young people" in the district, and its success represents a "stimulating and compelling" change. For some interviewed, OBE seemed to be one of several district projects aimed at the high risk students at the ALC. The other success stories--the district's middle schools--offer programs organized to closely fit the developmental needs of the early adolescent student: academic, social, emotional, and physical. A central feature is "advisory," a student-teacher counselling period that links students and teachers for four years. This helps "make kids comfortable" and be themselves.

Within the high school, teachers report that they "get together with each other socially," but have neither the time nor a network to share ideas and improve their teaching skills. Almost unanimously, those interviewed noted "no working relationships within and between departments." As one person put it, "Faculty sit in our own little world, and there is very little sharing of ideas." Some teachers mentioned that the absence of department heads is a "missing link" in a "flow of top-down communication." Administrators also reported a lack of time and connections for working on school improvement.

The OBE implementation at the school is in its early stages, with a few individuals trying the idea in a limited way. However, the general atmosphere of discipline problems and difficult students has, in the words of one individual, "overwhelmed" enthusiasm to plan and implement OBE. Another noted the need for an "open atmosphere" and friendly, effective working relationships for the eventual success of OBE in the building.

CASE STUDY REPORT 17

I. Site Description

About a decade ago, a merger of several high schools resulted in this suburban high school, serving approximately 1800 students. "Our neighborhoods are dramatically changing, especially socio-economically," stated several teachers. They mentioned increased diversity and a broader cross-section of families who send children to the high school. Teachers described the school's earlier neighborhoods as "originally upperclass, well-educated people." Now they report that neighborhoods feeding into the school comprise a "full range of people"--struggling families, affluent families, a large Southeast Asian population, single parents, and even some homeless. A number of the teachers reported that "not the whole community is concerned about education."

Because of that and other contributing factors, teachers clearly expressed a lack of community identity among parents, students, and staff. A few felt that the more affluent families were more involved in the schools, but, in general, people reported, "there's not a sense of belonging to the high school, not a sense of attachment." Nonetheless, parents and the community in general were described as "supportive" and concerned with schools, and there are "high expectations for the only high school in the district" from parents, the school board, and business people. The community has "consistently passed referenda and increased taxes to have quality schools."

The high school has been recognized for a number of innovative and progressive learning opportunities for students. The atmosphere of openness exhibited between teachers and administration, teachers and teachers, and students and teachers is perceived as being "advantageous in a changing world." Teachers praised the principal for his strong commitment to the democratic process, his "ethical leadership," and his "positive, optimistic attitude." Faculty were described as "willing to try new things as well as let others try new things, without being dictated to." The staff is "always looking for new ways to facilitate learning."

Everyone agreed that the school's organizational structure was not top-down, but "participatory." People who work at the site felt they were usually empowered to make decisions. The Department Leaders' Council meets twice a month with the principal to work on curriculum and instruction. They also are empowered as a group to make decisions about the allocation of resources. Faculty felt they allocated funds fairly to all programs and respectfully shared decision-making. The Faculty Senate is usually empowered to make recommendations that focus on faculty welfare issues. The School Improvement Council consists of administration, board members, parents, students, and teacher representatives who are involved in improving learning at the school.

There has been general satisfaction with this decision-making process, however, a number of teachers expressed concern about it. Most teachers said they were "much more comfortable with our model than the autocratic model" and appreciated having feedback and input, but some wanted to streamline the process to one faculty committee that would decide all issues. Several teachers acknowledged that "sometimes the same issue will go to three or four committees. It can be extremely unwieldy and time-consuming talking about the same thing two or three times." There also seemed to be decisions that are not readily made with this model. "The school board challenged us in mid-January to get recommendations to improve learning by mid-March. There is strain because people thought this was an unreasonable timeline." The pressure and the

nonparticipatory manner of this directive resulted in some strain between students and the principal, and the faculty and the principal. They also suggested there were some "communication gaps across the district and across the school."

Some teachers described the faculty working relationship as "comfortable" with mutual respect between teachers and students. However, most faculty expressed concern about being "isolated by department." "Within departments, teachers help each other, but you need to say you have a need." "We never talk to other teachers outside of our department if we don't share lunch. The building was designed for modular scheduling and departmentalization. I don't see colleagues unless I go to lunch, and many of us don't." This has led to some tensions. An experienced teacher commented: "I think we pay a price for not really knowing what's going on in another department. I think it's much easier to take a cheap shot at somebody if you don't really know what's going on." However, faculty did suggest attempts were being made to alleviate this problem.

The ability levels and attitudes of students in this population are mixed. Students who later go to Ivy League schools attend high school classes with students who don't graduate at all. Several faculty agreed that "some students have a serious agenda for survival, and they're here because of the caring." An alternative school within the school recently has been developed for at risk students. English as a Second Language classes exist for the needs of the non-English speaking students. In addition, special needs students have staff and funding to meet their needs. However, some expressed concern about funding equity for talented students, and a number of staff mentioned that the layout of the school is detrimental because teachers' and students' paths don't cross as frequently as they might. Overall, faculty sense that when students leave the high school, they feel well prepared; seventy per cent go on to higher education.

II. Change

Several recent changes have affected the school. The leadership style of the board has changed, the enrollment decline has forced the school to "downsize," fiscal issues are different and the money is tighter, and national criticism of schools has increased. A few teachers mentioned a need to "break the structure which encourages teachers to be lecturers and restricts students from discovery learning. Some teachers tend to be teaching for testing and satisfying people out there." Several faculty members expressed concern about "students in the middle who get lost." Teachers observed that special needs students receive good services, accelerated students receive some services, and middle/average students "go unrecognized."

Historically, the school has a commitment and motivation to change, yet staff are approaching the transition to OBE cautiously. Most faculty interviewed perceive the school board as "top-down decision-makers," and many teachers have become skeptical about board leadership. In addition, a few faculty feel "things aren't so good at the federal level, State Board of Education and the local board." The principal and teachers knew very little about the Office of Educational Leadership project. Many had heard about a written proposal after the grant was received and understood that there was an effort to identify student learning outcomes in a way that was interdisciplinary. Teachers believed it was driven by an orientation to translate objectives to outcomes, mandated by the state and district. In addition, they felt it was driven by an incentive to get funding and linkages.

Factors that might inhibit the implementation of OBE include the perceived lack of commitment and involvement by some school leaders and a lack of time and funding. One person said: "I haven't been made a believer. I perceive it as a

top down effort developed by the state and the district." However, another noted, "Competent teachers will set learning outcomes, exit outcomes, and general and individualized ones; OBE then becomes a subset tool of competent teachers." The staff were not entirely opposed to OBE, but many reportedly resent how the project has been approached. All faculty felt that time is the most valuable resource, and both teachers and the principal expressed a need for time to help students grow. Teachers do not have additional supervisory tasks such as lunchroom or study hall supervision because paraprofessionals provide that supportive role, yet sufficient time for attending to the additional demands of teaching is not yet available.

The faculty interviewed perceived that the school had made little or no movement toward OBE. However, an interdisciplinary proposal between industrial technology and science had been presented to the OBE task force, so "a beginning has been made." The learner outcomes have been compared and integrated among several disciplines, and cooperative learning occurs in many classrooms. In addition, collaborative interdisciplinary teaching occurs between social studies and home economics.

CASE STUDY REPORT 18

I. Site Description

This is a large high school of 1250 students that draws from many areas around the district. The community is experiencing problems resulting from its transition from a small town to a "third tier suburb." This change creates a "rootless feeling" and a subsequent need to identify the district as a community. A recent strike created hard feelings within the community, and it will "take time to repair these." The strike however, has made people more aware of space and budget constraints within the district. Support for education is "mixed," and school personnel see "more support for athletics than for academics." Another trend noted by faculty is a move from a vocational emphasis to more demand for "academic classes."

An accreditation report in the spring commended the school on a number of points, including its relationships between students and staff, calling them "cordial, caring, and support [sic]" and an "aggressive" administration that keeps the school "up-to-date." Both faculty and community find the facility "pleasing" and point to the technology available in the school. While the building is in general a strength, also noted, however, was the tendency of its size to segregate teachers by departments.

The rapid growth of the district has necessitated an increase in class size. Teachers identify a need for "more consistent discipline" to handle the enrollment changes. Another need is for better staff-administration relations. A recent report labeled working relations "open, supportive and very professional," and one administrator said, "We work okay together, better than okay." However, some staff feel a distance between themselves and the administration and expressed a desire for more participation in administrative decision-making. One individual stated, "It is rare to have a faculty meeting." Certain staff would like to be "better informed" and have more input. While concern about a lack of communication exists, teachers also expressed the belief that people would collaborate if time was made available.

II. Change

In discussing the building's change to outcome based education, one respondent stated, "We'll start small. . . It's going to be a ten year process, [and] we want to get a good start." This first year was planned as a staff development and planning year during which the site's MEEP team is leading a "committee on transformation." During the year, people have been working on "small changes." Support meetings have been held for "OBE people," a "school within a school" has been organized, and individual teachers (e.g., American history, science) have begun implementing OBE practice.

Some individuals report that the staff is divided between "those involved and those not involved" in OBE. On the positive side, some believe that OBE would allow better use of community resources and hope that it would better prepare students to "handle the outside world." Certain departments (e.g., vocational education and home economics) may see teaming as a "way to save their program." Another strength they see is the proposed IEP for all students. Some teachers also mention that OBE will help all teachers realize that "every student can learn and succeed."

There are, however, barriers to OBE in the building. One barrier is the "cautious attitude" of some teachers. For example, both teachers and community

members wonder if standards will be lowered in order for everyone to achieve mastery. Also questioned is whether required mastery will preempt a broad exposure to many subjects and ideas. One person wondered, "Does anyone really know what education needs to deliver?" Other concerns relate to the time available for writing outcomes, planning, adapting curriculum, and evaluating, and whether teachers will be "forced to adopt OBE" and then evaluated on it.

One frequent comment was, "Frankly, I'm cynical because I have seen so many education trends come and go." Mentioned in particular was an earlier experience with individualized curriculum and resource centers in the building that "burned out" several teachers. The accusation is made that the state jumps from one trend to another and that it "mandates things but does not provide money and time." A wish for education based on fewer demands from the state but more from the community was also voiced. At this point, some teachers do not see much actually happening--"lots of committee work"--and feel that there should be more feedback from these committees. Both teachers and community members expressed concern about the number of workshops required, feeling that one day sessions are disruptive. Despite this, people are willing to work on change. As one administrator supportive of the change process told the staff : "Be willing to risk things. If you get into [it] a little bit, it may transform your teaching."

CASE STUDY REPORT 19

I. Site Description

Initiated by a former superintendent and supported by the present administration, this Area Learning Center (ALC) recently moved "from a small broken-down duplex across the street. Now we are in a school." The physical setting is homelike, providing a dramatically different school and staff dynamic at a site people describe as "unique, innovative, and creative."

The history of this program reflects ongoing community tension about alternative educational opportunities for students who do not succeed in the traditional school, specifically many Native Americans who comprise 69% of the district's student population. Staff report a "general lack of respect" for the ALC, which some label the "alternative Indian school," and a sense that the program is "under fire." Some feel that "if the school board had their way, they would have us closed down." A "back to basics group" has verbally opposed the ALC, and people say that their opposition has influenced other educational staff who have been "slow to accept us and do not make referrals." This influence "has gotten in the way of what we are supposed to be doing--teaching the kids." In addition, relationships with the high school are not seen as positive; "it is a them-us sort of thing, and they have no idea what we are doing over here. "

Some teachers report recent progress as the program is now drawing a broader range of students, even some from neighboring communities. "We are seeing more approval because student needs drive the community approval, particularly when you get a student from an established family come through the program and succeed." Also important is the support of a "real strong Indian parent committee" at the ALC who serve in elected positions as an incorporated nonprofit group. As one teacher noted, "Real commitment is there--to students--to ensure that they are provided with a quality education."

The site has initiated OBE informally, using an 80% mastery standard for subjects which are broken down into units. Given the lack of guidelines for requirements, developing "outcomes for each student becomes difficult." Teachers report that this learning process forces them into a "real personal struggle every day" because they have to "invent classes" to meet the academic and personal needs of students.

At the site, teachers encourage a "humane system of learning" providing a warm, caring, and "empowering" environment for high risk students to learn. "We try very hard to be consistent to a student orientation." "We dare to use words like love, family, and feelings to describe our educational process, as opposed to formal rules and structure in which you lose your humanity." Every Friday the staff reviews how each child is doing and considers his or her status; "it is more like being a parent than a teacher." Currently, there are also curricular and social support services provided at the center.

In the opinions of those interviewed, the staff is "like a family," and, "when we say we are a family, we really are!" One person commented, "The staff here keeps me going. We have direct contact, and we don't get snippy with each other." At the Area Learning Center decision-making takes place as a team effort with cooperative management. "We are . . . ahead of the rest [of the district] and committed to it." When people are too busy, the administrator allows them to be "off task" toward decision making "because they are so serious about the learning process." Given the isolation they feel as a site, teachers mentioned the need to network with other Area Learning Center staff.

II. Change

In addition to the political challenges facing the site within the district, people listed other problems during interviews. First is the question of classification. The state

"categorizes the Area Learning Center with special education, and we are not." Second, licensure is a real problem at the Area Learning Center because "you have to teach so many different subjects." Third, the teachers feel they are overworked. "We have a waiting list of kids to get into our program, and it could be twice as large as it is now, and we would still have a waiting list." Despite the long hours and teaching challenges, work at the ALC does not receive special recognition on the salary schedule. A fourth area of concern comes from the school's main competitors, identified by four of five groups in a strategic planning process as two schools for Native Americans in nearby communities. Among the "threats" listed were curricular and extra curricular offerings, better facilities, Native American instructors, and employment and housing opportunities for parents.

Staff are positive about the effects of the ALC, even at this early stage in its existence. One person went so far as to say, "We are the best damn Area Learning Center in the state." "For those who graduate, it is a real accomplishment because it is a real struggle." "Their failures are our successes. There is a real sense of pride generating around the Indian students who graduate." For staff, there is also pride even in the students who drop out of the ALC: "The ones who have dropped out expect as much of themselves as the community [does]. They really feel that they need to get a job and support themselves. The students graduate or wait until the other parts of their life are straightened out, then they come back to the Area Learning Center." "We let them know the door is always open to come back in." "Some kids come in and say, 'If it wasn't for you, I might not be alive,' and that says something about what we are involved with."

CASE STUDY REPORT 20

I. Site Description

This innovative middle grades school marks the joint venture of an urban school district, business partners, the community, and parents. Following a competition for creative educational programs, the winning proposal was slated for immediate implementation in the fall of 1989, and staff rushed to ready the program. In its first year the school comprises three separate sites: one in the business district of a major city; one near an art museum and theatre; and one on a university campus. The staff includes two gifted and talented teachers, two special needs teachers, two open school teachers, and a principal. Groups of students rotate among the sites, moving with one teacher who stays with the group for the entire year. The staff has developed the school's curriculum throughout the year, narrowing its focus as they sought to complete both the district curriculum and special integrated skill programs.

The school exemplifies several innovations. Students experience three sites during the year, working regularly on real world examples with outside mentors in several subject areas. Certain teachers stay at a given site; others move with the groups. One advantage of having student groups from the teachers' perspective is that "you get to see the same kids over the years." This is reportedly a "real plus" because teachers get to know and focus on both the students' cognitive and affective development. Another innovation is the school's site-based governance. An overseeing steering committee and several sub-committees representing business, the community, and parents work with the professional staff on all matters related to the school. Further, teachers work together on a routine basis. As one educator commented, "The advantage of teaching in this school is working in teams and not by yourself." There is professional support: teachers exchange ideas and materials; and "no one puts you down." Parents are expected to become partners in the learning community. Indeed, the reason some parents got involved with this school is they felt it was the "answer to some issues of education. It allowed parent involvement and sharing of interest and concern with other parents who have left other schools for the same reasons."

People who were interviewed reported that this school is a "benefit to the kids." In the words of one teacher: "These kids are the hardest kids I have ever had. They always are questioning and asking why. They are bright and have taken on the challenge of learning and finding out why they are doing something." In this school the students learn "getting along," self-confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm. "It is up to them to find work they need to do, because they will do that all their life." When students leave the school, they should be "appropriately independent thinkers and problem solvers. They should have basic skills and ideas so that they can have an impact on situations through their actions." As one person put it: "When kids realize what kind of experience they had, someday they will realize, 'I really learned in that situation.'"

II. Change

According to those interviewed, the reality of bringing an innovative plan to immediate fruition has tested the stamina of everyone involved in the effort. Because it is new this year, this school in one sense is change, and a number of problems speak to the difficulties of the change process. As one person noted, "All we can do is try to make a contribution. I am willing to give my time and . . . I see

this can be done." Some of the challenges stem from the newness of the program itself. The school's proposal called for extensive community financial support, and funding has been a problem since its inception. When the school opened, the staff was "short on basic resources." This problem has improved as community support has come in, but "the school has not yet recovered its full start-up amount." As one person put it, "In the proposal there was specific mention of funding from the community, and when the year started, I expected it to be there, and we didn't even have books."

The proposed curriculum has also proven problemmatic. Rather than trying to complete both the district and an integrated curriculum--and simultaneously write outcomes--next year staff will focus on a theme and use that to coordinate the curriculum for each site. Another problem has been the steering committee, evolving into a site council, that has "not always worked." Many times the principal "had to intervene because of unclear expectations of committee work and roles." Finally, there has been a "difficult adjustment to scheduling and getting things coordinated smoothly" because the systems are not in place "so that you can just do something." There are problems with record keeping systems, "we are often running around for things, and things feel disjointed." Next year a new arrangement will provide the staff additional support and a "sense of community."

Parents report adjustment problems. Some did not expect to become so involved in their child's homework, and certain parents' expectations are not yet met. For example, some fear that the basic skills of math, spelling and reading are not being thoroughly taught. Others question whether they are getting adequate feedback on their child's program, homework expectations, and academic progress. However, this seems to have improved as time has gone on. Some parents have found the time demands to be difficult, and participation on committees has decreased somewhat over time.

Teachers working at the school have special concerns as well. A disadvantage to teachers who stay at one site is that the students may become "more attached to their travelling teacher" making a new teacher introduction more difficult. Some reported a sense of "isolation" because they were not all working in one building, and there were team differences, including teaching styles and educational philosophies. Some teachers found steering committee work difficult. They said, "We are trained professionals, but not prepared for site-based management and shared decision-making." The change in restructuring and staffing is an "adjustment," and "figuring out roles is a lot of work." Different expectations have been difficult for the staff. Some feel they have \worked "above and beyond the call of duty." This heavy work load led several teachers to say they may not return to the school in the fall: "I'm going to have to quit." They feel "expectations to perform to the standards of other staff members," and that "involved too much time." Further, working with students in innovative ways in some cases created discipline problems, and "there seems to be an issue for teachers between freedom in learning and inhibition of the kids."

The school represents a "new process for education," and, as such, it is "experiencing growing pains." Currently, there is an in-house district evaluation in progress that will continue for two years. As far as outcome based education is concerned, the staff are in its "initial phases," and what they know is "introductory and not in-service." Teachers expressed concern about how to train people in OBE: "I don't know how one person can go and bring back information to us all, and I don't know if I like that idea. It could work, but I hope there is enough brought back. . ." What the staff does know about outcome based education is that it helps with the "way you think about the interrelationship of the thought process and the learning philosophy." Outcome based education is "not to teach

what we know best, but to decide what to know and what is deemed important. The child will not fit the curriculum, but the curriculum will fit the child." "Learners are not held back if not passed, but rather there is a coming along and progressing." In the future, teachers hope to formulate measures beyond standardized tests using an OBE grant.

CASE STUDY REPORT 21

I. Site Description

Opened in the 1989-1990 school year as a working model of education for the future, this middle school is a city-wide magnet in a large metropolitan district that has a 42% minority population and a reputation for "good education." With a year's planning and fund-raising prior to its opening, the school has become a district showcase and received recognition nationally as an experiment in school restructuring. It has as its primary goal the "personalization of learning" in an environment that truly supports effective learning.

In two large open areas and several classrooms outfitted with state-of-the-art instructional technology, teachers, interns, and volunteers serve not to present information and administer drill and practice, but rather to guide and mediate what students want and need to know about skills, content, and the learning process itself. As the project director puts it, the school is "high tech, high-touch, and high-teach" with a student-centered focus that uses technology not as a substitute for teaching, but as a tool in the learning process.

Affective outcomes are central to the school's vision; students are to be appreciated for how they fit in the school community or for what gifts they have to offer, and "that gives them a sense of efficacy." As one person put it, "Some were needy kids because they were not welcome other places. This school shows them they are good learners and can be successful. They are shown they can make decisions and choices, and it's all right to do something their own way or alone. Students are given freedom. Some are not ready to handle it, but many have grown in their ability to handle it."

Because it is a magnet school, parents choose to send their children and agree to collaborate actively with school staff by developing a personalized growth plan with their son or daughter and then supporting the learning process throughout the year. The student body reflects the diversity of the larger community, including 40% minority and 15% special education students. Ability levels, measured by standardized tests, range from the first to the twelfth grade. Staff work collaboratively and creatively with students and their parents to design personalized plans that meet individual needs, encouraging students to be responsible for their own learning.

In its first year the school's administrative staff consisted of a project director and a principal. The project director is a long-time central office administrator who was the initiator of the school. He has worked at a number of activities since its inception, making regular contact with administrators, the board, the community, and funding agencies. Original planning did not include a traditional "principal" position, but, given the multitude of tasks in starting a new school, "having an experienced principal on a part-time basis has been helpful." The current principal, however, looks forward to a day when his role and that of the lead teacher will be combined: "The role of principal, like [that of] the teacher, is changing because the principal is usually the instructional leader and input is top down. This school is bottom up, which gives a sense of ownership to the school community."

The instructional staff for the inaugural year included one lead teacher and three associate teachers. There were also two part-time, long-term substitutes and four interns from a near-by college of education. As their titles suggest, staff roles at the school are differentiated.

Staff development is an active, ongoing, and collaborative process at this school. The staff has conducted in-service sessions on planning needs and on curricular topics (e.g., whole language, writing, and effective communication), consulting with major educational leaders. In addition, various members of the teaching team have presented information about the school at professional conferences. School staff describe in-school

working relationships as "extremely positive," identifying themselves as a "working team." One individual commented, "There have been incredible amounts of work, and we don't punish each other when it doesn't get done." Rather, staff work to be efficient by regularly changing tasks and not wasting time through overlapping activities.

The school's model includes intensive evaluation conducted by teachers and collaborating university professors both to provide information to staff on an ongoing basis and to determine program effectiveness. In the mind of the school community, no activities are fixed; all can be changed if need be. In addition, nothing will be considered a failure, including students who actively choose to change the context of their learning.

A final component in the school is the Parent Community Council comprising parents, teachers, and students with a mission to "promote effective education for students." Agenda items for the Council routinely include the following: curriculum; budget; staffing; policy; community involvement and resources; and home/school communication. Some Council members are looking for ways to actively involve more parents. People report strong potential for active community participation, sensing that "the downtown welcomes" the school and sees it as a "step in the right direction for education." In one of the experimental features of the program, students use community resources off school grounds (e.g., museums, recreational facilities), forging partnerships with businesses and other agencies.

Given an atmosphere where students and teachers alike are learning interactively, the school exudes energy. The experimental nature of the learning model--where students are not required to follow a single path-- provides staff dramatic challenges on a daily basis. "It is sometimes chaotic and hard to keep on top of what is happening and to know what to do," noted one staff member.

The general tone of people's discussion of this school is positive and supportive. However--and not surprisingly--members of the school community report several concerns as the school moves into its second year. One concern relates to basic skills instruction. As a staff member put it, "Some [parents] are disturbed we don't teach spelling per se and reading and writing." Certain parents did mention a lack of books in the school for "reading and the basic skills of writing, spelling, and math." Unhappy with the use of computers for such work, a few also expressed the desire that teachers provide more direct instruction and evaluation in these areas.

While parents labeled conference time with teachers "worthwhile," effective home/school communication around specific issues is a second concern parents mentioned. These issues include student evaluation (e.g., feedback on writing portfolios, computer-generated computer forms from the basic skills materials) and expectations for homework. Some parents note a lack of homework in their child's weak subjects.

Teachers cited difficult teaching conditions as a concern, despite the promise of new and larger space during the 1990-1991 school year. During its first year, the school shared a facility with a special needs program, and, even with new furniture and equipment, the staff report that they have "paid their dues" in the physical plant arena.

A final concern relates to negative political fallout within the district for being given "favored program status" and the need to provide the community an accurate picture of the school's challenges. Recognizing its potential for innovative practice, the district has supported the school well throughout its development. One of 60 programs in an urban district, it has received special start-up funding as well as additional resources to purchase technology. Staff members report negative reactions from many district colleagues who think it unfair that this school, for example, has 80 computers "while others cannot get even two." Misconceptions and misinformation about the school abound, according to the staff. As one individual remarked, "[The broader educational community] is not aware of the range of problems we face, and what they know is hearsay."

II. Change

Because the school is brand new, the idea of its being "ready for change" does not apply. Rather, it is change, a model of a transformed school that will work into the next century. The staff don't know "the answers--or the questions, for that matter," viewing themselves instead as "pioneers" committed to developing this model with the community they serve and learning from the problems they encounter. In their opinion, with the risks of change come opportunities to do things differently. It is--to cite Carl Rogers--a "process of becoming"; it is "exhilarating, exciting, and exhausting." One person provided a telling reaction to the school's experience of change: "It has been a chance to learn [that] every day is new and exciting and a chance to do what you want to do as a teacher."

Working collaboratively with students, parents, and the community, the school staff are creating a model that builds on what is now known about teaching, learning, and technology and extends that knowledge-base through ongoing evaluation by all involved. They believe that any model of education must be adapted to fit its community: "The last thing we want is this model for everyone." However, because of their virtual uniqueness among OEL project sites, staff request assistance in sharing their experiences. ". . . money and time are needed to disseminate the story. . . We are looking for assistance from OEL to disseminate what we know." In addition, the staff is using the OEL grant money to document the personalized growth process, the computer augmentation process, and product outcomes.

CASE STUDY REPORT 22

I. Site Description

Both the student body and faculty of this middle school have been working through a year of restructuring and new programs. Two-thirds of the student body, the sixth and seventh graders, were new to the school in 1989 when the school changed from a junior high to a middle school. These students entered a new class configuration: each student was assigned to a "house" in which a subset of the class has its own group of three or four teachers, all within an adjoining set of rooms. This arrangement is designed to ease the transition from the elementary classroom, establish a cohort within the class, and provide opportunities for teachers to develop inter-disciplinary approaches. The house system seems to alert teachers to student needs. Fewer children now seem to "fall through," but the individuals interviewed all agree that they still lose too many. Two people estimated "losses" to be ten percent.

This is the only facility in the system serving this segment of the student population. Therefore, the student body represents a cross-section of the population and reflects the social problems of the entire community. There are many special needs, but the general feeling is that they are being met. "Forty per cent of the students are from one-parent homes. There are cases of abuse, chemical dependency, and foster homes." The response to the special needs may result in an unbalanced system, according to one teacher. "The special education staff is the largest group in the school. The in-between, grade-level, struggling kids get ignored. The exceptional, on either end, get the attention."

In the midst of a campaign for student offices, there were many posters to be seen throughout the buildings. Made by the students, most of the signs had only the candidate's name, and the name of the office sought. The exception was one created by a Vietnamese student, bearing a slogan, "The only way to Ngo!" Inside the classrooms one finds a livelier atmosphere in contrast to the halls, with student artwork and brightly colored posters appropriate to the subject taught in the room. The rooms in the older section of the building feel roomy with large windows and high ceilings.

II. Change

This is a school which has experienced many changes in a short period of time. The transition from "junior high" to "middle school" brought changes in staff as the ninth grade classes and teachers were moved out to the high school and sixth graders and teachers were transferred in from the elementary schools. There were unrelated administrative changes in 1989 as well, with the former principal moving to the high school to fill a vacancy there, and a new principal installed in the middle school.

The third important change was the introduction of OBE by the math department. To prepare for this change, teachers worked during the summer of 1989 to write learner outcomes and a new curriculum. This program has produced a range of responses among the faculty. Those not involved in it stressed the extra work involved in implementing the program--the preparation of new goals and curricula, and the retesting and book work involved in "letting students learn at their own rate." The sixth grade teachers were apt to liken OBE to the methods employed in elementary schools.

The staff and students are coping with these changes. However, they report experiencing a feeling of instability and need time to let it all work out. The staff feels that they are meeting the needs of the diverse student body and that they are in touch with the problems. They are a "dedicated" staff, seeking to work for the good of the students. They

appear to desire to work together and could do more if there was more opportunity for relaxed interaction and sharing.

Two areas of concern expressed by the teachers interviewed were the constraints imposed by the facility and a lack of time. "[A former principal] would not allow a coffee maker in both buildings, [because it made] for divisiveness. When he left we got a coffee maker. He was right." "I don't see anything over here. I don't have time to check my mailbox. There's no time to socialize, no time to get together and discuss what's going on over here." "I feel alone, you're forced to deal with everything yourself, there's not anyone that you can talk to." "You don't have a support group." "We have a team, which is real helpful, but [two other teachers] have different prep time that I do. It's just like being a long-distance teacher." "I need to see an adult more."

The decision-making process seems to be a combination of traditional--the chain of command runs from staff up through the school board--and local autonomy. However, decision-making within the 6th and 7th grades is quite different than that at the 8th grade level. It is also different for the teachers involved in the "house" set-up and other areas such as art, music, and physical education. There are a number of committees for decision-making input, but some report they are not well coordinated.

The approaches to change in this city and in this school are ambiguous. The stability of the community surprises many newcomers and often disappoints them. "My students--the ones who really had a chance to do something--are gone. But quite a few teachers are from here." At one time all of the principals in the system were from this city. At present, four of the eight principals in the district are natives.

This school has directly confronted change. Unable to replace buildings considered "beat up" and "divisive," the staff has attempted to convert shortcomings into assets by going to the "house" plan, using the fragmented sections of the buildings for sheltered mini-communities. At the end of the first year of the program, there is a casual friendliness among students and teachers. Students write that their teachers are the "greatest in the world." There are also instances of students who do not fit in, and teachers who are not on teams speak of "loneliness and isolation."

Communication was identified as an important feature of the "house" plan, enabling teachers to "keep an eye on" specific students. Direct communication with the older people in the community through the "Friends of Education" program was considered key to passage of the most recent referendum which provided for smaller class size. One teacher commented that "a majority of people do not back the system of education. The old do not, and a lot of younger people feel that it's not necessary because they didn't get an education here."

Because of these divisions, it is difficult to achieve consensus on the direction of the schools. There is also the harsh reality that the town is not growing, and some sense that the majority prefer it that way. They must be convinced that change is desirable and necessary improvement. Teachers at the middle school would like to cultivate this type of contact by developing programs involving "grandparents" in the schools, bringing in senior citizens to work with students so they have the opportunity to see and appreciate the work being done there.

Staff development at this school is not seen as a coherent program in which all teachers can participate. The staff development program was reported to be adequate, but time limits their ability to benefit from the available opportunities. There is not a good grasp of what the staff development committee does or how it functions. They are given time for visits to other schools, workshops, training opportunities, but again the problem is to fit these into the schedule. "We have lots of opportunities, but can't use all of them." Some teachers take the initiative themselves, e.g., some took a course on OBE when it was offered at the state university in the summer of 1989, while others plan to take the course during the summer of 1990.

The student body includes a broad spectrum that reflects the make-up of the community. The group includes everything from the emotionally disturbed to advanced

placement students, and the system mainstreams everyone. Creation of the middle school resulted from a feeling that the adolescent children in grades six through eight comprise a population with a distinct set of developmental problems. The conflicts of this age group can be seen in one student's statement: "Almost all the kids here hate me."

The math department in the middle school was the first to develop and implement OBE in the district. The project is perceived to have resulted from one individual's "brainstorming" and the use of this power as curriculum director to force implementation. "We were OBE-ized in two days of workshops." Teachers feel the program is "grant driven" and was forced upon them with little preparation or training.

The teachers interviewed like the philosophy of OBE as they understand it: to promote success for all learners. They dislike the traditional grading system, which they feel can be punitive, but efforts to change this system have been strongly resisted by parents. Even those teachers not participating in the project see that it is "making a difference for those in it--their expectations for success are raised--and that will carry over into the future even if they are not in OBE." Interviews with parents of children in the program were similarly optimistic. One boy, described by his father as a troublemaker, has begun receiving good grades, while another student was seen to be benefiting from the change from competition to individual learning. The combination of the middle school plan and OBE will, it is hoped, have an effect on the dropout rate, estimated to be at 10%. Some teachers report that this is already happening.

The extent of recent changes has had its effect on the faculty of this school, who described it as "a nightmarish year." "It made people angry, unhappy, dysfunctional." "It has cost us dearly." Many protest that there have been too many changes in too short a time and that there has not been "closure or satisfaction." Another view is that it is perhaps better to make all the changes at the same time. "Sometimes you can't make major changes unless you change a lot of things. One neat thing is that we can write new learner outcomes, we can develop new curriculum, we can have interdisciplinary teaching, because we've got a whole new set up. I like the idea that there's a lot of changes, whereas if you just try to do one, everything else is out of sync. I've heard that criticism from a lot of people: Why don't you just do one thing? If you're going to restructure your whole delivery of education, which we really are doing here, then I think it is easier to do it all at once--except that it's very stressful."

The goal stressed by the faculty is a better learning environment for the student. "One measurable thing would be that the level of graduation would go up." "I would hope that students would feel successful themselves and feel better about themselves." "If school could only be a place where 'we get to do this' instead of 'do we gotta do this?'"

A major concern heard repeatedly is that there are "cycles" in education. Too many programs are enthusiastically entered into, only to be dropped because of funding problems or lack of follow through. Many teachers have the attitude "this too shall pass." There are teachers who state that they "believe in OBE" and have great confidence in its favorable effect on students. At the same time, they see the program as costly, and their experience both in local school referenda and with previous state programs is a cause for concern in terms of the likelihood of future funding problems.

CASE STUDY REPORT 23

I. Site Description

Located in an area undergoing a slow evolution from "rural" to "suburban," this junior high school of 700 students draws from surrounding communities seen by some as contributing the "slower" students. Providing much of the district leadership, the veteran teaching staff holds conservative views and sees the community as "more concerned with sports than academics." The staff considers most of the student body "well motivated and well behaved." "Our students come and stay" [rather than coming and going]." Only the few who come from dysfunctional families are seen as creating problems; one problem cited repeatedly is the influx of students needing special services. Without better budget support, this school "simply cannot meet all needs." At present one counselor serves the entire student body. Support groups were suggested because students "can't be academic until home things are cleared up." These students need "recognition and caring," and staff see this as difficult to provide adequately with 30 or more students per class. Some believe that more time on "social awareness" would help all students.

The maturity of the staff is a "real plus" for implementing new programs. These "teachers desire to teach to the best of their ability." Staff are encouraged to experiment, and the administration "looks for strengths" rather than weaknesses. The staff is also supportive of one another. Decision-making is "top down," but teacher input is solicited, and teachers report feeling "comfortable" with the administration.

II. Change

"We're on schedule" for this first year of the development of outcome based education, noted a building administrator. An OBE Steering Committee has worked to create an awareness among staff and developed a description of "what an OBE classroom does and doesn't look like." "We need to get people to buy into the concept early on," and team building is a high priority. A pilot school within a school (125 students and six teachers) has been planned collaboratively, and "we've already written a lot of our own outcomes."

Overall, the faculty seem to believe that the "idea behind OBE is good and wonderful, but that implementation is difficult." The building is "not well arranged" for dealing with students who need reteaching or those who do not pass. Some teachers express reservations about OBE, feeling that when the stress is on mastery, risk taking may be inhibited for both students and teachers, and passing may become the end-all. Teachers are also concerned that content may become watered down. Other faculty note problems with providing enrichment; "work at your own pace" may mean packets or worksheets for students, but little time for individualized instruction. Some teachers say they "need to know more," and "I'm not taking OBE seriously until it is here." They also voice a need for time and cooperation for team teaching and scheduling.

Another issue raised is unhappiness with how the state has handed OBE down "from above." Teachers see this as a ten year rather than a two year change process and feel that the state should have done more long-range planning. They also would like to see better evidence of a long-term commitment from the state,

especially in terms of money. "The staff are ready, but wonder whether resources will come. . . They need to know there's some financial support behind this." In general, the community appears "indifferent to OBE"--perhaps because of a lack of communication about it.

CASE STUDY REPORT 24

I. Site Description

Given a middle school mission seven years ago, this former junior high school is located in a district that has changed from a traditional rural community to one with a large number of individuals who work in the Twin Cities. While some report that not all factions of the community as a whole give education a high priority, people at this school feel there is "a lot of interest and support from the community for [their] school to do better." The middle school concept has "changed the community," and staff report more parental involvement. For example, parent conference participation has risen dramatically, from 60% to 90%. There are other supportive innovations in the community such as the "prestige card" that is awarded to students with a 3.0 grade point average along with community recognition. In the opinions of adults working at the school, student-school relations have also improved.

People describe the school as "a very progressive school that is going through transition and evolving." Moving away from the traditional junior high school program, the school is working to institute something new, and, for many, "it is positive to be involved in the middle school philosophy." This middle school is focusing on meeting the needs of its young adolescent student population.

II. Change

When the school became a middle school, there was some concern because it combined staff from elementary and secondary schools, many of whom brought different ways of thinking about teaching and learning. In the beginning some staff "didn't want to be there," although by now people report the faculty is working well together. After a middle school mission statement was developed seven years ago, an idea from that statement was added as a program component every two years. In order to meet the developmental needs of students, interdisciplinary and team teaching, teacher-student advisory groups, increased parent involvement, and block scheduling--seen as the "culmination of seven years' work"--will all be in place by the fall of 1990.

The staff acknowledges that the block curriculum will be good for "a child's behavior and success in class," and they want to have subjects that "make kids do academically better." However, changing to a block curriculum raises, for some, a number of concerns. Given the state of the building, a first concern relates to physical space for implementing innovative instruction. Second, while the staff feels the ability for sharing is positive, some fear it will be "team planning, but not team teaching." Third, block scheduling may not be beneficial to enrichment classes such as art and gifted/talented that will necessarily become larger. Fourth, teachers know they "will [continue to] be stuck doing student contact work like study halls." Finally, some sense that the community is "not real excited about the block curriculum because it means more money."

CASE STUDY REPORT 25

I. Site Description

Housed in the "newest facility in the district"--a building that opened in 1982--this junior high "totally embraces" the concept of a middle school and is using OBE as the means to dramatically change teaching and learning. Within the past several years, teachers report a highly positive feeling among colleagues in the school. "We are a caring staff, like a family and fairly stable." The faculty "is willing to come up with new ideas and things; they are generally an involved faculty open to change." "New ideas are plentiful," and a fully functioning, 12 member MEEP team meets weekly. On the whole, the faculty "can disagree, but agree to respect dissenting viewpoints." As one person noted, if a proposed idea bothers someone, "That teacher can now say, 'I feel very uncomfortable with this,'" rather than working to subvert the change process.

Everyone interviewed acknowledged that the administration's support has been key to the staff's positive feelings. They are "very open-minded and willing to do what needs to be done." "They let us all do the best we can." The principal is described as a "real spearhead," promoting innovation and committed to change. As he himself put it, "[Even] if we don't get another buck, we're going to restructure. This school will be different next year." In the words of one teacher, "The principal's leadership is empowering to the staff. . .; he is able to maintain respect and [yet] be one of the crew." "When the principal hears an undercurrent, he goes to the source and values all opinions equally." Teachers help to plan all inservice sessions and, where appropriate, provide training to their colleagues themselves.

II. Change

The words of one individual summarize what many in the school seem to feel: "This place is ready for change." Another staff member reports, "As recently as two years ago teachers were saying, 'We have all the stuff (for a good school), but we're dissatisfied. So what do we do?'" The collaborative process instituted by the principal and facilitated by the MEEP team has already resulted in change, and more is planned. Four examples are sufficient to make the point: 1) A special team provides study skills training for students and parents in two week sessions throughout the year; 2) in 1989-1990, six teachers "experimented" with OBE, setting 70% or 80% as the passing grade and allowing no failures; 3) a group comprising math, science, and social studies teachers has planned interdisciplinary units; and 4) the school will no longer offer general math to ninth graders, but rather will help all students to pass algebra.

The staff clearly "prefer to influence change, rather than have it given to them." The teachers planning inservice sessions have continued to ask the question, "Why are we changing?" assuming that "we don't want [or need] to change everything." The district may have mandated OBE, but this school is working in their building to make meaningful changes that will last, reflecting the comment that, regardless of what happens elsewhere, "this [change] is here to stay." People noted specific concerns about OBE as an innovation. As one teacher put it, "OBE needs to be fitted and tailored to each school so it works for them." "OBE is voluntary in this building, and it will be inhibited by the size of classes. . . [that are] too big for implementation." Another reflected the common concern of district support: "If it is not used wholistically, it could be dangerous because it could disrupt a system and not build toward something."

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CASE STUDY REPORT 26

I. Site Description

Faculty interviewed agreed that "the students are the focus of this junior high." The site is the designated district site for special need learners, and many students transfer to the site for the quality attention they receive. Students are encouraged to be responsible and are formally recognized for their successes. Many of the 650 students are high achievers, motivated, and involved in extracurricular activities, however, an influx of inner city students with greater personal and learning needs has challenged some staff. All students are afforded opportunities to reach their "full potential" through Supervised Elective Time (SET) time, "back-up time," and special service assistance. Students were described as "less bound by authority" than in some communities, and writing assignments and discussions indicated that they felt cared for and comfortable with the staff. The school is an Eisenhower era building of one story, easily accessible to the disabled. The immaculate building has several lighted cases that display student work and other activities that include staff and students.

The value of parent involvement was reflected in the parent handbook, an active school parent organization, and the high regard teachers and parents expressed toward each other. Parents and teachers describe the parent role as a "supportive force rather than a driving force." Parents sponsor and operate two staff appreciation meals a year. They also chaperone student activities and serve on committees. The parents interviewed were satisfied with the school and trusted it. Several expressed concern about those who wanted to "crank" up the test scores, possibly at the expense of kids who "simply need to survive adolescence." The parents also felt the value of their input was demonstrated through inclusion in some decisions, e.g., the screening and interview process for the new principal. In addition, parents serve on advisory committees and work with teams once a quarter to discuss what is occurring in the school and the classroom.

In discussing their working relationship, faculty said they were "open about expressing their opinions" and that it was "healthy for the most part," although they described themselves as "independent" and "strong-willed." They are considered capable, caring, and people who also have fun. "For the most part, we pull together." Nearly everyone admitted they were in a period of transition and growth. Some indecision about leadership roles still exists, yet the principal and staff are confident that they "will work through that." Staff development in this school is strong, based on a survey of needs. "We're always wanting to try something new . . ." Faculty either get paid for their time or get board credit to attend workshops.

II. Change

Recent changes described as affecting the school include the operation, procedures, and bureaucracy of special services. Several teachers noted that there has been an impact on the school with the enrollment decline, an increased use of technology, an aging staff, and an increase of students who "need to survive." There is also continued pressure from the legislature, the community, and the school board to "do more." The staff hoped to see the focus on students maintained in the years to come. They want to be able to "anticipate needs, have a vision and not stagnate." Several mentioned they would like to see advanced technology which "will help keep track of, monitor, and involve the students more." Others said that they wanted to see students have a strong science, math, and technology

background. One teacher commented: "I'd like to see the district in-service teachers more about the needs of special education kids and integrate special education more than it is. In OBE there should be less graded curriculum, more opportunities, and instructional methods that vary beyond the classroom." A few teachers also mentioned the need to address students' needs and their problems through increased involvement of the social workers. Other felt an extension of the school year, the employment of teachers for a month or two in the summer to plan, and a community- involved school day that might vary from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. would be desirable.

Over the past year, the principal has moved the site from a traditional decision-making model to one which actively seeks participation from staff in directing decisions. The organizational structure functions around the three decision-making bodies of MEEP, team leaders, and department leaders/chairs. Although still in the transition stage, the staff are confident the decision-making process will work out satisfactorily. The principal believes that the "people who are closest to the decision are involved in the decisions," and the faculty are now clarifying this process. The staff has formed a task force to assess how the process will work for the next school year. Certain individuals expressed frustration with the decision-making process that necessarily goes beyond the school. One teacher mentioned: "We've been given direction and work orders from the school board that tell us what to do, but we do it and they say, 'Sorry, do it again.' So we spend a lot of time spinning our wheels. We're asked to do a lot of things that do not directly relate to the classroom or the student."

There are several factors influencing change at this site. The physical layout of the building is a concern. As one teacher explained: "The way the building is laid out, we really don't have enough time to get together and talk to each other. The staff room is out of the way, and there is not a central meeting place where everyone can meet, debrief, and make some contacts. Everybody stays in their own little wing and then they're gone." The age of the staff was discussed as a weakness because of "reduced energy levels." "People are slowing down. With the aging there also is a tendency to be more resistant to change." Furthermore, staff who are accustomed to making their own decisions feel that OBE is being "shoved down their throats" by the board and by the state without "knowing what the outcomes are supposed to look like."

Despite concern over the process, however, teachers readily admit that "change is healthy." As one teacher put it, "Timing is so important in learning for the student and for change in the school," and there are some positive factors for change in this environment. The school structures itself on what research says is important in a middle level school. Many faculty mentioned how caring the faculty is, and, in addition, the staff is "very future minded." Most teachers expressed interest in "keeping kids one step ahead of the competition." They explained their desire to be on the cutting edge and to implement programs that other schools in the state use. Many of the things middle level schools are excited about in recent conferences "we have been doing for a long, long time."

Historically, the school has a commitment and motivation to change, yet the transition to OBE is being approached cautiously. The principal and teachers knew little about the OEL project. Many had heard about a written proposal after the grant was received and perceived there was an effort to identify student learning outcomes in a way that was interdisciplinary, particularly integrating fine arts with other areas. Teachers believed it was driven by an orientation in OBE to turn objectives into outcomes, mandated by the state and district. In addition, some thought it was driven by an incentive to get funding.

Many of the faculty interviewed perceived that the school was in the beginning stages of movement toward OBE, although a number of teachers

thought OBE was in place because it was simply a "new name for outcomes, goals and objectives." A staff member commented: "We've been dealing with OBE in departments for a while, especially as we come up for board review. We've had several release days for those who said they wanted to be involved. The district is future oriented. They want to create change and not get caught." Some teachers were extremely receptive to the concept of OBE. "I think OBE would individualize education tremendously. Kids could work at their own pace and at their own rate. Each student will have his own individual plan as in special education."

Several factors may inhibit the implementation of OBE. The manner in which the concept has been introduced into the school is a primary factor inhibiting the implementation of OBE at this site. Other factors include the perceived lack of commitment and involvement by some school leaders, and a lack of time and funding. One person said "I'm not convinced people's instruction will change." Teachers tended to be skeptical about OBE, wanting assurance both that it will work and details about how it will work. They question the time involved in writing "test questions," the lack of clear working models, and the way in which special needs students will fit into the picture. "Teachers feel it has been shoved down their throat" by the state and by the district school board. Some teachers recommend that if OBE is to work at all, every school in the district will need principal and staff support to implement OBE. Teachers and the principal also expressed a need for time to see how OBE will operate instructionally.

CASE STUDY REPORT 27

I. Site Description

"If education could be called a light, it shines brighter here." That is the opinion given by one of the respondents and seems to summarize people's feelings about this learning site, an elementary/middle school located in greater Minnesota. Approached by well-kept, large lawn areas, the building is a point of pride by the way it is maintained. The 1950's original section and the 1970's addition show no signs of their age except in their architectural style. The middle school occupies the west end of the facility, and the elementary the east wing. The school feels big, bright, and open, yet not so large as to be intimidating. It is well decorated, but not so busy that it becomes distracting or overwhelming. Individuals interviewed mentioned the facility as one of the site's strengths.

People also reported that the administration sets the atmosphere for the 30 faculty members and that it is "good," "supportive," and "caring." The administrative team is said to be balanced--having one visionary and one more practical person. There is also balance among the faculty with some teachers being new and bringing to the site the enthusiasm and ideas of the younger teacher, while other older members contribute their experience. Typically, working relationships were characterized as "cooperative," "working well together," and "easy to work with." Teachers "laugh and cry together." Also, they choose to "socialize and party outside of school, which includes spouses." When people listed the strengths of the site, it was the faculty and staff who were most frequently referred to. The impression is that here is a group of professionals who enjoy their work and each other. They are quite satisfied. "Teachers will not leave here just to chase a higher paying job."

A staff development program that is in-house and done in connection with a local multi-school consortium is reported to do an "excellent job" in supporting the faculty. The MEEP team reportedly functions well. With its long day, the elementary school schedule makes it possible to "bank" time which can be taken for workshops, in-service training, and other development opportunities. It was reported that the site has 12-15 in-services per year, many times the contract requirements. Those who do attend training outside the school are expected to share the material with the entire faculty, and times are scheduled to be sure that is accomplished. Further, the resources for development are available. "We're informed about what is available; we're encouraged to go." "If they want us to do something [in training], they are willing to pay for it." Staff development has the full support of the school board.

Teachers reported feeling sufficiently consulted in the decision-making process in the school. They felt that they were "kept informed" and that the process in place for making decisions works well and serves their needs. "We are trusted, respected, treated like competent professionals." Further, they indicated that any materials needed were provided so that they did not lack what was necessary for their work in the classroom.

At the middle school level, the school is in transition, having changed in the past year from a junior high school. There appears to be little interaction between elementary and middle school students. The middle school students questioned liked the facility. They thought highly of its cleanliness, saying that the maintenance person was "the best" thing about the school. For their part, the faculty is adjusting to their new clientele and said the students were "like kids anywhere else, with all the vices and virtues of their age group." "We're getting accustomed to them; we're adjusting."

However, the blending of two groups of students in the school has not been easy. All from the middle school level agreed that the students who came in from one site were academically behind, and "our kids had to wait nine weeks for them to get caught up." This feeling reflects the fact that the site feels that it does a better job than other schools in the area, and staff are confident that "kids are ready to go on to the next step when they complete the program here." For support it was reported that PER results have always been excellent. The teachers regularly express the idea that each student is special and deserves individual attention, care, and respect. "They need to feel like winners; feel good about themselves."

The handbook clearly describes the special needs programs that the school provides and how the students will be placed in them . The staff are proud of the services provided. "We're as good as anywhere." "We go the extra mile." "The principal here is a specialist, and we are way ahead of our neighbors in this area." However, there was unanimity in the opinion that the gifted are not well served. It was described as "an area of struggle." There were some who felt that the gifted had been short-changed with attention going to the other special needs. Even parents commented on the need for a gifted program.

Overall, the classrooms are friendly places, decorated with encouraging slogan posters or educational materials, as well as student art. Student artwork illustrating images of the school were all positive, typically showing all the people as smiling. Classroom peer interaction seemed to be limited, except for the first grade. The handbook spoke of a student's need for structure, and all the situations observed would indicate that structure is provided. However, there was no indication of heavy handed rule enforcement or authoritative dictates. Rather, there appeared to be a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation for the good of all.

There is a mutual confidence between the school board and the administration. The administration is described as "strong, competent, progressive" and can work without interference from the board. "They are not looking over our shoulder." There are continuing concerns about finances. "Everything is dollar driven; there's never enough to go around." Consequently, the administration makes decisions with costs and benefits in mind.

The elementary principal explained that the decision-making process used depended entirely on the issue involved. Some decisions are made by the school board by holding public meetings where options are presented and opinions heard. Some decisions are made strictly by the administration, and some are made in collaboration with the faculty. The staff participates as appropriate to the issue. The administration is described as looking for ways to help the faculty be creative. However, improvement is with a "wait a minute" attitude, which can be described as "we may not be the leaders, but we'll not be far behind." "We'll benefit from others' mistakes."

There is an obvious partnership between school and town. The parents are involved in the school by serving as volunteers for various school activities. They also serve on school related committees. There are opportunities to receive information as well as to voice opinions. "Notes go home with our kids," and informal communication in the town includes school topics. "There are lots of informal meetings." Parents feel free to consult with the school. "They listen to parents." Even the board is reported as "listening to the community." Being a small community, "you can deal with the head person, the one who can do something about the problem." The faculty reports that there is 100% attendance at parent-teacher conferences and normally this includes both parents.

School staff express a clear desire that the school provide an education that will equip students for the future. One of the few weaknesses mentioned was that "we are just beginning to understand what is available in technology and what can be done; we need to go further." Among the desires for the future expressed by

one respondent was the need for larger, more flexible classroom space so that more group work could be done, especially with study/interest centers. Classrooms observed gave the impression that students generally worked by themselves, doing "their own work" in what would be the traditional model. There appeared to be no disparities by age or gender.

II. Change

The school has just gone through a major change, the first year of a pairing and sharing arrangement, and staff are just beginning to deal with the implications of that. At the end of that agreement, there will have to be another decision about the future in terms of cooperation and combination or consolidation. They see themselves in transition, adjusting to the new situation. However, as with other changes, they entered it "optimistically" and will work to make it work. "We make the best of it." There was some resentment expressed since understandings previous to the agreement did not turn out that way when it became a reality, especially in the area of finances. This situation involved the willingness of the new partner to carry its own fiscal responsibility. The optimism and excitement has "mellowed out." Apparently, the promises and expectations of anticipated change should be realized in its implementation. Otherwise, it becomes problematic, something to be coped with rather than something producing benefits and enjoyment. A positive change was the switch from an Educational Cooperative Service Unit to an education istrict for staff development since it accomplishes what is wanted and there is a better program that includes follow-through. Forced change is resented and state mandates are not popular. A worst case scenario included "more state mandates."

The school is described as "progressive"; they "look down the road," they "see the wider world." "They are open to change." However, they are not willing to change just for the sake of change. They must be able to justify change to themselves in terms of student accomplishment, educational results, and cost-benefit considerations. Justification must also be to their wider public, the people served by the school. The allocation of limited financial resources is according to the justifications for the changes. Repeatedly the concern was voiced that "bigger is better" thinking will force changes upon them which may not really improve their education environment. There is concern that "schools are being asked to do what they used to ask God to do." Money concerns are very real; chief among them is that the state will start programs with funding and then cut it off, requiring the locality to continue the program on its own resources. They expressed dislike for the state's "bait and switch tactics."

The introduction of OBE was done by giving the local newspaper information for the school section. Public informational meetings were held for interested parents, led by the principal and involved teachers. Parents expressed the feeling that teachers are already doing what OBE will require--giving individualized attention, using units of accomplishment, giving students a chance--so why should it be necessary?

The only transformation that was specifically examined was the issue of OBE, which is being done cautiously. It came through the education district with the interest of and promotion by the elementary principal. The two teachers who will work with the program have been added to those who are committed to it. Parents' meetings have been held to inform those who will have their children involved. At this stage the learning outcomes are being developed and implementation at two grade levels in limited subject areas will take place in the fall of 1990.

It is reported that teachers are sold on the philosophy, but feel a definite lack in training for the specifics of writing and preparing materials. However, there were no complaints of "overwork" in regard to OBE. There are a number of concerns as the following list will indicate. There is no rank order implied in the following items, however, finances were the matter most frequently mentioned.

- The terminology is new and a bit radical.
- There is not enough information available; it needs more explanation.
- It will take a lot more training; more, better trained people to write and implement.
- It may require some structural changes of the physical facility.
- It will be difficult for older, established teachers to adjust to.
- Resources are finite and it will cost more money; where is the necessary funding coming from?
- It will take additional staff or more volunteers; is that possible?
- We don't want it forced down our throats.

CASE STUDY REPORT 28

I. Site Description

This school is in a community described as being "blessed with a state university, a Catholic college and a technical college, providing many post-secondary opportunities for our children." However, most of the young people who finish their educations at these colleges are forced to leave. "It's a town with out-migration. Much of the city's income is derived from those educational institutions, yet people also talk about a "large anti-intellectual group, who don't value school very much."

The school is one of the larger elementary schools in the city, with 554 children enrolled in kindergarten through fifth grade. Since the last referendum limiting classroom size, the classrooms each have 25-28 pupils. There is a faculty of 38 teachers, one principal, and support staff. The neighborhood is working class, with "lower income residents. The houses are closer together. There are larger families, and a high at-risk student population." However, there are also students taken out of school for trips to Europe with their families. The student body is primarily white, but there are some minorities. It has the highest number of free and reduced price lunches in the district and is called a "microcosm of society."

The school is the district's Educable Mentally Retarded (EMR) school, and there are over 30 now enrolled in the program, which may account for the number of "at risk" students and children qualifying for the federal lunch program. The majority of these children are mainstreamed; they are based in a regular classroom and go to the EMR room for some learning activities. There is an exception for kindergarten and first graders who are based in the EMR room and taken to the regular classroom for part of the day. The mainstreaming provides the social interaction these children need to help them learn that they are "more normal than abnormal." The school does not have any hearing impaired students, but there are students with other physical handicaps in the school.

While teachers describe the student population as a "neat mix of kids," the school has a reputation as having the "toughest students in town." Because of the referendum, the school cannot enroll any more students, regardless of their proximity to the school. There is friction between the school and the community, which some attribute to a time when "wealthy people brought in people to work and made sure they did not bring in unions. We have almost like a ruling class and labor class." Teachers and administrators fit into either of those groups, depending on the observer. To many of the "blue collar" workers, teachers' salaries may appear very high. At the same time, teachers are union members in a city which has long despised unions.

Teachers are concerned about the schism between the elderly and the rest of the community, which may be centered in the competition between the young and old for services in a community with a low wage scale and tax base. "Because there are so many community people that don't have children in the home anymore, they start to forget about them. I see the parents getting poorer and poorer and having more and more needs. Young families probably need as much help as our elderly do. I sometimes see the community just not caring anymore about kids. It scares me." In spite of these tensions, this school has "the best parents and senior citizen volunteers." The volunteer program was set up by parents after a volunteer coordinator got "burned out." The program identifies a "key" person for each grade whose job it is to see that each teacher in that section has help. A large number of these volunteers are senior citizens, a group some consider to be against educational change.

The faculty members interviewed were highly positive in their opinions of the school. "It's a nice place to teach." "I love this school. I was told this school was a slum. It's not a slum school." It's also called "close-knit. The staff and students get along pretty good, and the people listen to each other. We have an excellent administrator."

II. Change

The individuals interviewed were all members of the more outgoing group of teachers in the school, working with the handicapped and active on the School Improvement Council. When asked about the outcome based education program, their concern was not so much that teachers would not accept it as that the program was presented in a way which insulted teachers and that it is driven "top down" by a "grant writer," rather than from the instructional level. The approach used in the district has been to introduce the program to the principals, then to send the principals and a few teachers to a seminar. Those people were then to spread the word to their co-workers. The program was hailed as "new and different" and mandated by the state, which was interpreted as sending a message that the teachers have not been doing their job, i.e., that they had not been teaching "right." Some teachers are insulted by the claims that all children can learn with OBE. "It doesn't consider that that was always teachers' focus. Of course we want children to succeed."

This said, the faculty of this school appears ready to make many of the changes required for OBE, and in fact some have rewritten curricula, such as "Everything the Kindergartner Should Know." Learner goals have been an integral part of the Individual Education Plans (IEP) which these teachers have been doing, and the goals are part of the "Mission Statement" of the school. "We've been doing it for years; we know what we want at each grade. It seems like OBE kind of fits our school." The fact that this is an older building with self-contained classrooms is not seen as an obstacle by the faculty. "We enjoy the self-contained classroom, and I think the principal supports self-contained classrooms." They feel that the important element in the program, as in any teaching program, is the teacher, and the enclosed classroom is seen as lending itself to the "direct instruction approach. . . where they've got the 'human computer' to interact with all the time."

Because the school is the district EMR site, most of the teachers are accustomed to writing IEP's, to finding different approaches to instruction, to reinforcing and encouraging children to succeed--all basic tenets of OBE. "We do IEP's, plan what we're going to do throughout the year, and we see parents two or three times per year." Not only are EMR students mainstreamed, but their other classroom teachers try to include them in as many activities as possible, requesting that they be in the regular classroom for special events. This interaction is most important to the EMR students, many of whom have trouble socializing. "The main goal in EMR is to get the self concept up. When they feel better about themselves, they do better."

Not everyone on the faculty has the same interest in working with handicapped children. "Some teachers are not in tune with EMR kids--a small number of them." In the same vein, not all are enthusiastic about OBE. "Some of them are afraid of change." To overcome the resistance to the new program, the teachers who attended the OBE seminar suggest that everyone be permitted to attend such a presentation. They described it as "futuristic" and "motivating" for them and feel it would remove the feeling of insult which may now prevail.

The school has worked with the School Based Management (SBM) program for seven years and uses grade-level "clusters" to transmit information to and from the School Improvement Council (SIC). All of the teachers from certain grade levels are called together as a cluster. A "lead" teacher organizes the meeting, at which the teachers "go over things that would affect the curriculum or students. We then come back to a staff meeting of SIC where we share the views of all the teachers that we had talked to. The SIC helps keep our school working well." "A few decisions have to be made by administration, but we discuss things a lot before we make a decision." The staff works with the administration on many building decisions, but the teachers recognize that "the principal

is definitely the instructional leader here." Staff development is "school driven," although some teachers do not understand how all the parts fit. "Teachers are encouraged to take part in workshops." There is an "on call" resource list: doctors, dentists, and police, who can be used in a class or a cluster of rooms.

The maintenance of the old building is a source of local pride, and interest has recently developed in the preservation and restoration of historic buildings in the community. At the same time, local people are seen as resistant to change. "Most people do not understand OBE. They do not want change and they do not want to spend money doing it." The present resistance to funding building plans will have repercussions in the next century, when "these buildings will probably all have to be replaced at the same time." They have been well maintained and the materials were of good quality, but the "mortar is crumbling, and greater structural damage may be concealed." A further complication is the comparison with the private schools in the city. The Catholic schools recently received a large endowment from a private foundation, permitting changes not possible in the public schools. References to "better education in the Catholic school" are not uncommon. Approximately 30% of the city students are enrolled in private schools. In other ways the residents of the city embrace change. There is a new residential subdivision being constructed in the area served by the school. While many older residences are well-maintained and have become showplaces, much of the lower cost housing has been permitted to deteriorate and attracts low-income families.

The failure of a referendum to replace the middle school has been attributed to poor presentation of the need. At the same time, credit for passage of a second referendum which limited class size in the elementary classroom is given to the "Friends of Education," a group of non-education professionals. The fact that the educational community did not participate in this promotion is considered relevant. As noted above, the school has an exceptionally high rate of volunteerism. However, the neighborhood includes people whose needs overwhelm their ability to participate fully in their children's education.

The faculty of this school challenges some of the assumptions of the OBE program, specifically that the program is a new concept, that they have not been doing a good job previously, that there are not other ways to achieve the same ends, and that structural changes are needed to implement the program. Several teachers criticized the decision made by the district to "marry" OBE to the "mastery learning" (ML) method. Both stress working toward an outcome by permitting the student to improve his or her effort: retake a test, rewrite a paper, try again. While teachers appreciate the extra chance students have to succeed at a task, they are disturbed by the effect on some of the better students. "Kids are handing in more slipshod work initially. They know they'll have a chance to improve." "I don't want to see kids that think they do not have to do a good job immediately. It's the good student that I'm worried about changing." "With OBE the outcomes are the end result--what we want at the end of our schooling. This district is choosing mastery learning as the way they would like to see teachers achieve those outcomes. I really disagree with this. I think teachers should have the ability to choose different ways to get to those outcomes, mastery learning being just one of them. In ML you teach to the objective. The student who reaches the objective is enriched; those who do not are retaught and then given a second test, and then you move on. There are lots of other approaches. I think ML is neat for administrators because they can really tie down those results. They can get numbers."

One teacher was in the OBE cabinet, the initial group to write about goals, but has since been disappointed in the way the project has developed. It has become no more than a "grant process. We've lost the good ideas. It's grant-driven now rather than teacher-driven. It hits teachers' egos. There are other ways to accomplish the goals, but some of that was lost; people have not been brought along." The teachers are also concerned about the time available for developing outcomes and especially for developing enrichment

materials. "Where are we going to find the time? The district is going to have to have a wealth of material available. The district will have to put more time and money into it."

The "empowerment of teachers" is also an important issue. The question of empowerment through School Based Management and in decision-making in the district was challenged as a "false sense of power" by one teacher, who felt that certain decisions must be made at specific levels. "I don't like to see teachers wrapped up in financial decisions and budgets. I think that's divisive. Our biggest decisions are in our classroom, and we make them everyday." Another teacher expressed concerns that SBM would lead to inequities in the district: "I hope we have a strong superintendent, someone with a good overall picture of the district. There is a need for the central office to coordinate things in all schools so there isn't a student in school X who has more opportunities than a student in school Y. I'm afraid that strict SBM might do some of that. I also hope that union leadership is consulted before a lot of decisions are made."

The faculty would like some recognition from the community that they are doing a good job, that implementing the OBE program would "not be so much a remedy as an incremental improvement." They would like genuine input into district plans, to have change generated by the needs of the learners and staff, and not be "tied into" a "grant driven" project.

CASE STUDY REPORT 29

I. Site Description

This elementary school is in a suburban community that has parents who are highly educated, with "expectations for their children and the school." Strong parental support was mentioned as a strength of this site by the principal and all teachers interviewed. The principal put it this way: "We have lots of programs in the school that are run by parents that we wouldn't be able to have without them; the playground structure and the computers for the computer lab, things like that." A teacher said, "If you ask for volunteers, you'll probably have ten to eleven volunteers for one event." "Parents also expect teachers to be accountable to them. They expect you to document your test scores and have examples. It matters to parents that their children do well on tests."

Faculty descriptions of students portrayed them as "generally hard working, from good families and stable homes, bright, socially homogeneous, eager, spoiled, and hurried." Several teachers also pointed out that the students are "sophisticated."

Academically, the students perform well according to all teachers interviewed. Most faculty interviewed stressed that children "have pressure to achieve from parents who value how well the students do in school." The needs of the special students who "come from all over the district and from outside of the district" are being met through "lots of supportive mainstreaming." Materials and expectations are adapted to mainstreaming special needs students from three self-contained classrooms, and the importance of integration was evidenced by friendships between mainstreamed learners and classroom students.

Descriptions of students when they leave this site were highly positive. The faculty remarked how they have worked together on study skills. "The students have gotten a good academic foundation, and social expectations increase with each grade level appropriately. They have become more independent learners. They make good use of their independent time, they've learned to use folders for each subject, and to be responsible. Basically the students learn to develop respect for themselves and for others."

Although "there are some conflicts," the faculty's working relationship was described as "good for the most part." Respect was a word commonly used to describe the principal and teacher behavior toward each other and students. "There's a high value placed on persons besides their professional contribution. We're encouraged and nurtured by the principal." Several teachers described the faculty as friendly, willing to help, basically open and willing to compromise. As one person put it: "We're having some organizational difficulties, but we have fun together. We do things together socially and enjoy each others' company." The principal commented: "I think we try to provide an atmosphere here of fairly strong relationships of both parents and students. From discipline to everything else, we try to deal with it through relationship building."

Everyone interviewed described the decision-making process as participatory and based on the consensus model. Team leaders work with the principal. "The principal shares decision-making in representative groups. There are two phases: team leader meetings for staffing and culture studies; and weekly advisory meetings for programming times. In the team leader concept, people represent their level, and . . . decisions are made at meetings and returned to staff."

Satisfaction with the way in which decisions are made varied. Many teachers were grateful for being "trusted and made responsible by the team-based

process." However, the majority of teachers interviewed expressed concern about the length of the process. "It's a slow process, gathering input from the staff. Some agree with the consensus model and some prefer that minor decisions would be made by the administrator or one group."

II. Change

Several changes were described as having had an impact on the school, the first being a boundary change. A staff member said, "A drastic change in the last five years was redefining district boundaries and blending new parents and students into our rules and program. It's a long process of accepting and feeling a part of the community. . . Some parents and children are still mourning for their old school." Another teacher commented: "We assimilated kids that needed sensitivity and to learn how to treat each other with respect. There was positive response, but it was rocky."

The reporting system has also changed, moving from a traditional system to the mastery management system. These objectives are regularly sent home to parents. One teacher commented: "There have been amazing results. Children are learning more material faster. We pretest each new topic from objectives and post-test them. We can streamline for a particular group of kids, based on few textbooks." One teacher expressed a concern about this change: "The core testing and mastery management need to have adjusted testing and curriculum because it a failure experience for some kids. There's a lot of testing and mastery management. There needs to be more discussion of the affective, how kids are doing socially. I'd like to see outcomes in their self-esteem."

Reorganization of the student body to multi-age levels with team leaders at each level made a significant impact during the past years as well. Currently increased enrollment has called for a return to individually graded classes, but retaining the team leadership. These classrooms were also affected by an increased "awareness of learning styles and individuals, " including "mainstreaming and integration of handicapped at our school."

The increasing expectations of the state and district which require more programs added to the same timeframe are a change which teachers report has added stress to an already busy day. The increased use of computers and technology and more environmental concern with recycling and Earth Day have also had an impact. In addition, the replacement of four retiring staff members will create new relations.

One person commented on OBE this way: "The concept of OBE is attractive to me because I hope it will serve a need by helping us to focus. We somehow need to help teachers manage the knowledge explosion." Another suggested, "It sounds exciting because it sounds so clean cut and expectations are clear. The idea of teaming in unusual ways and of kids having success sounds exciting." Another mentioned, "I know the change to OBE will lighten the curricular load, what I need to teach."

Faculty knew that an OBE grant that included them had been written. No teachers knew of the collaboration among the state, the university (CAREI), and the sites across Minnesota. Staff members were not aware of any formal staff development targeted for OBE except the general session with an external consultant last fall. Most teachers felt the OEL project developed at this school because "others were informed we had mastery management and it would work appropriately with OBE. It felt natural since we had a head start compared to other schools."

Several teachers felt they were at the beginning stages in the project with OBE. A faculty member noted: "Even after our speaker from the state department,

some teachers misunderstand." Another said, "We do have mastery management and a group studying it for a year to look at the meanings, but we have no specific planning that I know of." A committee has set out to begin OBE with the 6th grade and continue through the lower grades. Some suggested special education staff might share their expertise since they focus on individualized outcomes for a child's needs.

A number of concerns were discussed as factors which may inhibit the implementation of OBE at this site. Some teachers are frustrated that they will have to do it alone. They wonder how to accommodate it in the traditional classroom in which there may be twelve who have mastered an objective. They ask, "What do I do with those twelve as I lead the other students?" A majority of teachers felt that the amount of work it requires should produce something useful and valuable to parents and students. They believe it shouldn't consume "hours and hours beyond the school day because teaching is already an endless job of record keeping." "We need to work with kids, and much less paperwork." A more optimistic teacher said, "It's okay to try something, see mistakes and revamp. It doesn't have to be letter perfect."

CASE STUDY REPORT 30

I. Site Description

Located in a traditional and conservative community where area natives make their home, this elementary school is approximately sixty years old. Stability leads to what many people described as the "conservative" nature of the community which is seen both as a source of support for the school system and a primary source of resistance to change. Parents are extremely supportive of the schools. The negative side of this traditionalism and conservatism is that it is "hard to pass a school bond, people think what was good for them is good enough for their children." The result is that the staff is confined to small, isolated rooms which preclude many innovations such as team-teaching, and limited space restricts the enrollment to the point that new children cannot be accepted regardless of their proximity.

The school is described as a "real family." This picture of stability and hominess is changing, however, as the local demographics change. With increasing numbers of single-parent and two-income families, the opportunities for parental participation decrease. The school is also seeing effects of social change in higher numbers of children with learning disorders. The district emphasis on "lower quartile achievement" means that "special needs" children are "mainstreamed" into the regular classroom where their behaviors are sometimes seen as disruptions. "It's not pleasant to have them in your building, because the boys and girls use bad language, kick and swear, and then our students see it, too." Historically, the child entering or leaving the school during the school year has been an unusual experience; however, with one third to one half of some classes now coming from single parent families, that, too, may change.

II. Change

A measure of readiness for change at this school can be taken from the response to changes that have occurred in the past five years at this site. Generally the response to change will be determined by the amount of preparation and the degree of control that is given to the faculty. The staff at the school "have been undergoing considerable change in recent years, but remain intent on their goal." Effective communication between the faculty and the administration is cited as essential for the successful adoption of any directed innovation, and the perception that the expertise of the teachers will be considered. The administration notes that teachers do have input in the decision-making process, however, the type of decisions made by the teachers is not considered by them to be of real import.

The impression that the voices of teachers carried less weight than they used to was expressed. Until this past year teachers were compensated for serving on the School Improvement Council. While the payment was a small amount and seen as a token, when it was rescinded by the school board, it was perceived to indicate the SIC had no value to the district, a decision teachers took as an insult. Opinions on this issue did vary. One teacher put it this way: "Some feel that decisions are made for us, but I feel I can go into any administrative office and speak my mind without fear of reprisal. I feel teachers still do have input."

There is a perception that historically this "district has been a leader in looking at success for all children." During the summer of 1990 teams of teachers "will be writing study guides to go along with learner outcomes to include reading

K-2, and math for the intermediate level, 3-5. The teachers will be in-serviced in August to learn what was done." Regarding the adoption of the OBE program, communications and preparation strongly influenced faculty attitudes. One teacher related that there were two general feelings about the program, that it "was not a lot different than what I'm going," or "so now I have to do this." Some teachers likened OBE to Assurance of Mastery teaching which they had been doing in the classroom.

Within the community, the presentation of anticipated change will be as important as it is with the staff. Of importance to the general public will be how the new curriculum fits into the traditional values and how it affects their traditional image of the student. The individuals interviewed demonstrated an awareness of, and appreciation for, the goals set for OBE. As several noted, Assurance of Mastery, which has been in practice in the school, is consistent with the OBE goals in using multiple bases for assessment, success for all learners with equal achievement for at risk learners, and an integrated system for learner outcomes.

Special needs are at present an important feature of the curriculum at this school. The staff has developed collaborative techniques driven largely by their unusual composition. The relatively small size of the staff and the daily schedule encourages interaction and cooperation. This recognition of expertise has in the past led to the coordination of efforts and the formation of a team to work on the learner outcomes and materials this summer. Increased collaboration, specifically with the administration, will enhance the teaching conditions in this school. One teacher also expressed a concern that the district teachers be able to create their own materials for OBE: "I don't want to see a person being hired out of Rochester, Minneapolis, or St. Charles to come in and design our enrichment activities for us. . . I think we have to stay with what we really want as our focus here."

The goals of elimination of disparities by sex and background will no doubt require positive effort by the school system. The traditional sex roles continue to be prevalent in the community, as evidenced by the number of mother-homemakers available to volunteer in the school. Several teachers discussed the lack of responsibility on the part of the students and the need to encourage them to be responsible for their own education. "Have students take responsibility, initiative. Have to give them leeway, let them make mistakes. Try to have them figure it out as a group. Parents need to be a part of the school also, and have to be used in the school." Such a focus directly addresses the goal of collaborative learning and also would promote the goal of student groups to support personal needs and learning.

CASE STUDY REPORT 31

I. Site Description

This elementary school is located in a rapidly growing rural community that is quickly becoming a more suburban, bedroom community. The population, predominantly white, is varied in terms of economics and family structure. There are old farm families that have some wealth, single parent families primarily headed by mothers, commuter families where both parents work, and some traditional families. The school also draws from the surrounding smaller towns and townships, where some report low income families often live in "poverty like conditions." For some, the school's location, seven miles from the district center, creates a sense of mild "alienation." Community members complain, "We get second best," and "Our tax dollars are spent in [another school in the district]." They also note that it is "hard to tie that much area together" when referring to the district as a whole.

Not surprisingly, the town's growth has created problems with the tax base, exemplified by a trailer park that adds many children, but no additional taxes. Some community members report that stricter zoning laws are needed to improve the tax base, sensing that in the meantime school resources are strained. On the one hand, more affluent parents demand programs like band, orchestra, and foreign languages, expanded programs for gifted and talented children, an academic emphasis, and a multicultural curriculum. On the other hand, the school is serving children with special needs, and there is support for equity funding, teaching values, and exploring options such as year-round school. Certain parents increasingly depend on the school for caregiving such as medical screening. There are also serious concerns about building maintenance (e.g., the need for a bucket in at least one classroom to catch roof leaks when it rains.)

While the school manifests some of the problems derived from the rapidly changing community, at the same time it represents a positive, stable force. As a whole, people indicate that the community is supportive both of the schools in general and the teachers in particular. For example, during the last teachers' strike, community members brought coffee and pie to the picket line workers. Most see the school as a "nice place to work" with staff that is a "real strength" and that has "positive attitudes." The staff are "concerned and caring about kids" and "very current in training."

However, the building reflects the tensions inherent in the growth of its school population. What started as a small staff in a small building is now three times its original size, with a "deluge of new teachers" that affect the former "family-like atmosphere." Some perceive competition for attention among instructional teams. The changing student population caused others to comment on the need for additions to the staff: a full-time social worker, counselor, and Chapter I teachers for grades five and six. Others cited the need for a multicultural program and for efforts to build school loyalty.

II. Change

The group that initiated district participation in the OEL project included the principal of this elementary school, and, by and large, attitudes toward OBE in the building are positive. As one individual put it, "Over 90% of the people on the faculty want and believe in OBE." In the words of another, "The ethic in the building is supportive." This school is also a second stage MEEP school, which provides an "excellent vehicle for change." Positive teacher comments include the "practical" nature of OBE, support for an ungraded approach, and a desire to better meet the needs of individual children.

While positive attitudes prevail, some barriers to its implementation exist. Perhaps most obvious is the problem with the building. It is overcrowded and, in the minds of many, poorly maintained. Its architectural openness is thought to be "detrimental to

instruction," a problem clearly exacerbated by the increasing enrollment. Another barrier to change may be what some perceive as a "lack of leadership" in the building. One persons sees "no structure for change," and some staff express the need for more clarity, direction, and training. Another fear expressed was the belief in "OBE as an end-all when funding may disappear after two years." One teacher remarked that "they want a lot with a little money." Another expressed concern about the potentially negative interactions of grade and age combinations. Community members also expressed skepticism and lack of understanding for why teachers repeatedly go to workshops on OBE and leave their classes with substitutes.

School staff had ideas about an appropriate change process for this building. Some would like more initiative in the planning and implementation. "OBE needs to be worked in gradually." "We need to see it to believe it," and "we need to be convinced it is a good thing." Staff skeptics mentioned concern about having enough time to make changes and the need for more staff to properly implement OBE. The principal's ability to get grant money is seen as a positive force, but "while there is a basic understanding of the OBE concept, there is a lack of well-defined priorities."

CASE STUDY REPORT 32

I. Site Description

This elementary school, housed in an early-century, three story brick building with bright yellow doors, is the primary school for all K-6th grade children living in three surrounding communities. There are 240 students and a teaching staff of 17 in the school. During our visit the school was stirring with excitement over the new addition, considered significant for several reasons. First, the staff pointed to it as a sign of strong community support for school improvements. Second, it alleviated the cramped quarters in which many of the staff have had to work. Third, it reduced fears that the community might lose the elementary school to consolidation.

When asked to describe their school, many staff immediately began talking about their students: "Our reason for being is the children. . .we really care about the kids. If it's good for them, we do anything." They spoke of their students with great affection and with great sadness as the end of the school year approached. The staff view the small size of their school as a great strength, one that promotes the emotional and intellectual well-being of all their students. It allows them to get to know the children personally and to understand what is going on in their lives. Reaching "each and every child" is a pervasive concern. High self-esteem was mentioned as one of the major goals of the elementary school, reflecting frequently expressed beliefs that "every child is special and unique." It was also evident in teacher displays of patience, listening, and affection while helping students with class assignments.

Concern for the wellbeing of the children spilled over into discussions of the teachers' role in the school. There was an emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving skills that would make them "well-adjusted, functional adults." Observations also revealed a heavy emphasis on the socialization of children into a culture that valued and enjoyed books. Many of the classrooms had their own libraries.

When asked about what they hoped students would take with them from this school, a common response was that "they would leave here knowing that they are special and that they are worth something, that their thoughts are worth something, that not every problem in life is easily solved. . . that they like themselves." Teachers feel most of their students are being well served, but there was a concern that "gifted" children might not be getting all of their needs met.

The teaching staff is an older, experienced group, with an average of 15 years of teaching experience. They speak of relations among themselves as being "quite good" and "supportive" and find the school an enjoyable place to work, as do newer teachers. Confidence in the experienced staff is reflected, in part, by the decision-making system in the building, which is attempting to become more participatory and "bottom-up." In general the staff feels that their judgments have been respected regarding curricular and instructional innovation and that most of their needs for resources--if not met--are at least recognized. There are mixed feelings about changes in decision-making that place greater emphasis on teacher involvement, although situations where matters could be clearly communicated, addressed, or related directly to teachers' classrooms were appreciated. Buildingwide decisions or policies, however, were not working as well, and many felt that issues were left in limbo, without clear identification of who was in charge of making or facilitating a decision. In some cases there was a sense of "decision overload."

II. Change

The staff appears to be very open to changes that might enhance the quality of learning for their students. The administration has been willing to defer to teachers' judgments when it comes to experimentation: "If you want to try something new, go to the administration, check it out with them, and give it a try." Most people interviewed spoke of OBE as "a way to reach all the students, so if you pretest, those that need help can get it and those that have mastered it can do enrichments." In spite of their concerns as to whether the money and time allocated will be able to do justice to their ambitions, the overall mood about the school's potential is positive. "I am excited about moving on. I think we have some really strong possibilities here. I think if anything, we're too anxious. It's going to take time and it wasn't until [we learned more about what other sites were doing] that I realized just how long it's going to take."

When asked about what would enhance OBE, a cooperative spirit, free flow of information and continued support from the administration and the community were thought to be essential. But these same concerns were those highlighted when people were asked about what might inhibit OBE's success: "It probably won't succeed if the teachers don't think it's important. We need to have administrators who believe in the program. We need to have parents who are supportive. . . If one area breaks down, then that's going to be a problem." Of the groups mentioned, parents were most often identified as the group in need of further outreach and understanding of OBE. Indeed, one question raised by parents was the following: "We believe in change if it will help our kids and we are confident in the teachers, but why does it have to be OBE?"

Teachers expressed their reaction to receiving the grant as one of shock followed by a sense of "Okay, now let's get down to business." A leadership team was formed comprising two MEEP representatives from the elementary and secondary school, along with the principals of the schools. With the help of the leadership team, effort was spent in two main areas: 1) developing exit outcomes; and 2) staff development. In 1989-1990, the teachers in the district have been engaged in developing exit and program outcomes by subject and grade. Subject exit outcome meetings were attended by groups of elementary and high school teachers and then by grade level for grade exit outcomes. This was to ensure coherence across the K-12 curriculum. This past spring, the elementary teachers began to work on unit and lesson outcomes also, a process planned to continue summer and fall of 1990.

Changes in the staff development process were perceived as both the most useful, as well as the most challenging aspects of the district's OBE plans. The OBE grant application stresses that they wanted to nurture the talents of the teaching staff and develop "in-house experts." The proposal spoke of the difficulties of generating significant school transformation in a series of one-day workshops organized by "outside" experts who were gone by the time teachers needed advice or assistance. Aside from workshops held at the school (which were favorably reviewed) teachers have volunteered to provide leadership for bringing certain kinds of knowledge to the staff. The faculty were surveyed for their interests. The OBE Lead Team paired one elementary and one secondary teacher with similar interests who were willing to travel for training. As in-house experts, teachers are being asked to provide leadership and assistance to the development of the whole district staff. The elementary school mentioned that the new addition will assist this process in two ways. A professional library will be established, and an expanded faculty lounge may enhance opportunities for professional discourse.

One of the most impressive staff development steps taken by the district has been the decision to devote every other Monday to staff development. School will not be held at either site on these days. Teachers who have gone out on training will use these days to share their knowledge with their peers. In other words, they are staff development days by and for these teachers. Teachers are uniformly pleased about the willingness of the community to accept this change and believe it will give them some much needed time to learn and discuss new ways of teaching.

CASE STUDY REPORT 33

I. Site Description

The school is located in a small, rural community in an area of the richest soil in the state. The struggle for survival is seen in the school where its low enrollment and the local financial situation makes it difficult to offer the basic program requirements of the state. It is reported that Department of Education pressures have forced changes, primarily linkages with neighboring school districts. In response the school joined a consortium of area schools from which various support is derived. They had also arranged Pairing and Sharing (PS) with a neighboring district which expires in 1991. Now they are preparing for a new relationship, Cooperation and Combination (CC), with a different neighboring district. During this time some perceived themselves to be in competition with other local districts, at least until the agreements were completed. All of it is seen as something imposed by the state when in fact local educators felt they were doing a fine job of education. The result of these changes was expressed clearly by one respondent, "We're all numb." Preservation of the school, maintenance of the program and local values, dislike of change and money worries are all repeated themes at the school. The school is seen as "better than average" and people want it "just like it has always been."

The original building is over 50 years old, and its age shows in visible repairs and areas in need of maintenance attention. Except for special use rooms, classrooms are set up in a traditional fashion. Some student writings indicate a desire for what is not there--a swimming pool, larger lockers, a school store, as well as equipment like more computers, personal tape players with headphones, and TV access. Overall, one gets an impression that seems to exist throughout the community: we are unpretentious and will make do with what we have, taking good care of it so it remains useful. It is good enough to do what we ask of it. If it works, don't try to fix it, and, besides, the important thing here is people.

Exceptional good morale was reported by nearly all staff members. However, there are concerns. The small staff feels "drained" and "overworked." There are many teachers who are part-time or shared with other sites. These people report tensions regarding assignment of extra work, which is routine for the other faculty. Part-timers are expected to do the same kinds of extras, without extra pay. Some interviewees complained that the part-time people do not receive the support of the others due to this situation. The faculty felt limited by a lack of resources: "There just isn't enough time or money." This lack even affected the availability of the principal. The principal was highly praised as well-liked, helpful, and encouraging of the faculty. This individual listens to teachers and attempts to keep them informed on issues and opportunities for professional growth. Working as a colleague is in contrast to the superintendent who is thought to believe in hierarchical relationships. However, the principal is only at the site half-time.

During this school year the majority of staff reported that little had been done in the area of staff development, and they were dissatisfied, although one teacher felt that the opportunities afforded were "ample." Staff development is in control of the superintendent, who has concerns about student learning when teachers are gone from the classroom. Additionally, there seems to be a policy that no more than two teachers can be gone any day. Board members clearly stated their support for staff development. Therefore, while there is some support for it, there are problems in implementing the staff development from the standpoint of many teachers. However, all agreed that there would be no staff development done

during the 1990-1991 school year because the budget was on hold due to the impending change from PS to CC.

Students were described as concerned, interested, positive, able to work together and taking pride in the school and their work. The drawings of the elementary students confirm these impressions. However, those interviewed mentioned that the lack of a program for EBD students, the absence of a full-time counselor, and the need for something for the bright students created problems for the school. Yet they also agreed that when students completed their study, they were "ready for the next step."

Within the classroom the students were under the control of the teachers. The student handbook made it clear that such behavior was the expectation. The rows of desks, class management, and student responses all indicate a traditional approach. When elementary classes were observed passing between rooms, they were lined up in two rows with the teacher leading, moving quietly and orderly. During informal times the students were active and talkative. There was talking, touching, and lots of smiles between students and teachers. It appeared to be a friendly atmosphere. The impression is that the students respond according to the expectations of the situation which are defined and clearly understood. Formal times produced formal interaction; informal opportunities showed them to be active and talkative as one might expect.

The superintendent is full-time, the principal is part-time. Decision-making was described as top down, with the possibility of change only in cases where strong feelings are expressed. It was reported that staff members were represented on the committees that were involved in major decisions. However, staff described the board and superintendent as "not understanding education," but "too worried about money." Some felt that decision-making included consultation ahead of time, but most felt that many people were left out of the decision-making process. This was especially true of the part-time, shared faculty or those who resided outside the community who felt outside the network.

Home-school ties and mutual understanding were indicated as values that served well to provide a good learning situation for children. Teachers reported good attendance at parent-teacher conferences. Since parents know the teachers who live in the community, there is often non-school related interaction. Parents indicated that they feel comfortable calling teachers at their homes. Parents also serve on committees, attend board meetings, and use the non-formal channels of communication to discuss the school issues and occasionally to exert pressure. Repeatedly the respondants told of the decision made for PS where the community was not included, with very negative results. When the CC discussion began, parents were included from the beginning.

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was that parents wanted their children to have the same school experience as they had had. The school served them well, it can serve their kids well by doing the same things. Parents want smallness so they can know the other parents and be involved in their children's schooling. The community is committed to the school, taking pride in it, wanting it there, even referring to it as the "lifeline." However, the nature of the commitment varies. It should "be small, letting the children know they are cared for," "helping them have a sense of who they are and where they belong." However, one teacher felt that "economic issues and convenience enter into the support commitment."

II. Change

One of the respondents expressed it well: "The fears of change are greater than the realities." Another suggested that the community realized the need for

change to meet the demands of the 21st century, but that the community people value and want the old ways. When changes do occur, one said, they feel that, "'Nobody asked me, and they should have." They reluctantly go along with change if it is explained and they become convinced of the need. They want proof that the change is an improvement, especially in the field of education. Change must be seen as all right for the community before it will be accepted and supported. Then they will cope, as they have in the past. The difficulty is the immensity and rapidity of change when the process of building understanding cannot be accomplished as quickly or as thoroughly. There are those who support change as opening opportunities for their children, while others see it as ruining a good thing that they wanted their children to experience. There are some who mentioned that local control doesn't exist, i.e., that all the local people can do is respond to state requirements or state funding availability. Dependence and subservience is resented, and too much educational change is forced on them.

At this point in the school-community history, there is a clear impression that school staff and the community are experiencing about all the change they can handle. They want things to settle down. For the past three years they have been involved in PS, and it was a difficult change for the adults, especially. The school boards found it more difficult to work together than had been expected. Now, the relationship is ending. Negotiations have been completed for beginning a new CC tie with a different neighboring town. All energies are focused on the successful implementation of that change, and further change at this time would be very difficult to initiate.

The interviews produced a list of key questions to be considered relative to change:

- How does it help the community?
- What is forcing/causing the change?
- Will it keep a school in the community?
- How fast must it be accomplished?
- How much will it cost?
- How many people involved and how will they be affected?
- How difficult will it be to accomplish?

If satisfactory answers to these questions can be determined, change can be implemented. With the first change to PS, this process was handled only within the board and administration, and it caused a highly negative reaction. For the second decision, the one on CC, this process was carried out in a rather public forum, and it was successful. It became evident that successful change must not only deal with the specific situation involved in the change, but with the entire community as well.

The only transformational issue specifically addressed in interviews was OBE. Generally, it is perceived as something "coming down from the state." The person closest to OBE felt that there is disagreement about it at the state level, so it is no surprise that the local levels do not understand it very well. At the same time there is fear that it is something that will get funding start-up and then get shifted to local budgets. Another concern is that it will be just another fad and "with all the new things--MEEP, PS, CC, R&D--there is just too much." For those involved in OBE, it is a bit intimidating: so much work, so much time required, so much computer work required, unpaid work required, it needs more personnel. All of this will require training for all faculty members and that again raises the issue of time and money. However, it will be implemented slowly, beginning next year. It will be limited to one area of curriculum for one grade level, largely done by one teacher.

CASE STUDY REPORT 34

I. Site Description

This elementary school is located in a small city with a "big percentage" of older, retired people, a "working class town." The community is described as "close knit, a lot of people have grown up here and stayed here. . . relatively crime free, not real progressive, as far as education goes," where "the old keep a low profile, but have lots of power. . . They are consumers, and they vote." There is a schism between the educational community and the residents resulting from struggles to obtain voter consent to improve the school facilities and raise teacher salaries. The school personnel interviewed express concerns that the older people are resistant to those improvements because of fears that their taxes will be raised and because the old buildings are still "good enough." Teachers express resentment that the voters seem to direct their resistance specifically toward them, placing restrictions on money raised so that it cannot be used for teacher salaries. Teachers suggested that the school has not done enough to reach out and involve this older segment of the community in school activities, to convince them that the needs of today's children are different from those of students years ago and to demonstrate that they are doing a good job in the school.

At the same time the faculty in this building describe it as a "second family" with good, cooperative working relations, where people are caring about each other. The school climate is described as highly supportive, and several teachers credited the principal for the high quality of collaborative effort, for involving the school in the "pilot" phase of the MEEP and the SBM (site-based management) programs. Through these programs the teachers have been able to share in such administrative functions as budgeting and staff development. The principal was also praised for demonstrating flexibility and his attention to classroom concerns. "He backs you up, you know where you stand."

The restructuring of the district's schools has changed the climate within this school considerably. Teachers feel that the maturity of the modern sixth grader created tensions in the lower grades and that this group is now more appropriately placed in a situation with older students. The student population is now seen to be more amicable and interested in each other. The students have also been given a wider role in school activities through their own council which has had an effect on the school climate. As one teacher said; "The council has pulled school spirit together."

At this school a "child study team" consisting of counselors, a school psychologist, a social worker, a nurse, and the principal meets every week for an hour to discuss high risk children. The effort is directed at trying to help the student through what may be "just a one time thing, a family in transition" or long-term learning problems. In addition to this in-school support, there may be referrals to social services or law enforcement, "key people" able to help with the problems. There is wide recognition that the problems seen in the school today will not go away. "There is less time for families to spend on homework, or even just talking to their children about what's happened to them that day, maybe not less interest, but everybody living such a fast paced life."

II. Change

The staff at this school has demonstrated its ability to change while working through the MEEP, SBM, and School Improvement Council programs. A teacher involved in the original MEEP team related that it was "hard at first, getting other

teachers to accept" the idea of teacher involvement in administration and staff development, but that over the six years of participation they have become supporters. "I've seen the staff pull together more. People who have concerns are not afraid to bring them up to the principal or the MEEP team."

The faculty interviewed were all members of the MEEP team and are preparing to make more changes in school programs. Several discussed frustration with the attitudes seen in teaching: "Tests can be punitive, the attitude of the classroom can be punitive--how you handle classroom problems." Another suggested the additional work that has developed with change. "Over the years more pressure is being put on the classroom teacher, requirements to do more, in the same amount of time that we've always had, we have to teach computers, we have to squeeze that in, then the counselor comes with her things, a special program, and you have to squeeze that in." Others spoke of the need to change the public perception of what schools are doing, to enlist more public support.

Some teachers see adoption of the OBE program as a continuation of established practices. The concepts of goal setting and helping learners to achieve those goals have been employed in the primary grades for many years. There are those looking forward to implementation of OBE and those with reservations: "For me, a teacher, it would put it exactly, so everyone would know what you are teaching, where you are at, why you are doing it." Another said: "It's going to be a long-term project, and anyone resistant to change who hasn't been working in this way, it's going to be much harder for them, where I can see it being a benefit to the students, and to the student's parents, because they'll know what's expected." One teacher saw OBE as changing the role of the teacher: "With OBE, the learner understands what they're learning and the teacher can provide support for learning. If they understand that they will be using what they are learning, we can get a lot more youngsters to the level of success. Teachers begin to be proactive instead of being reactive." "The main thing is it's going to take time to get it written down, so everyone in the school district has the same learner outcomes in every area."

Those with reservations about the implementation of OBE sometimes questioned how the goals would be applied to all of the children. "I have my doubts about all these philosophies about each child can learn, can achieve at the same level. . . I still think there are some kids that are never going to." Within the school system there are reservations that the leadership is committed to the OBE program or that they have "the capacity to create the need for change that OEL looks for." The role of leadership in this transition to OBE was seen as critical; "this school--everyone--they need to know where they're at, they don't like surprises, they need to know the research. I think they'll do what is best for kids, but they need to know they will have some time for planning."

The apparent lack of leadership combined with the public attitude toward school finances has some worried that if the OBE program is begun, the time and funds will not be sufficient to support full implementation. A common concern is that it will be dropped before it is fully in place. "Be sure there is funding before you get into it, there's nothing that turns people off faster than to get their hopes and enthusiasm up and then pull the rug out from under them and say 'no more dollars, sorry,'. . . It's always money. The last six years, a lot of false starts, some districtwide, some state 'dog and pony shows.' People say 'this too will pass, just like the other thing we had and that's sitting in my cupboard.'" There was concern that the school had not really sold OBE to the community as well as they might. "We're dealing with a greater number of retired, we've got to sell it to them, we've got to get over that hump that what was 'good enough for me is good enough for my grandkids.' Got to show them that the product that we're turning

out is a good product, and down the road you're going to benefit from that good product, and everybody's got to dig a little deeper in their pocket."

Emphasis is placed on providing a "balanced, solid education" for all learners. The goals of the school are for a program which will reach all learners and enhance the opportunities for children who will be educated in more than one school by district-wide commitment to the same teaching practices and goals. Coordination with support staff, counselors, a psychologist, and learning disabilities staff permits a range of approaches to resolving difficulties stemming from learning potential and family problems. The school environment has been improved by the MEEP, SBM, and SIC programs all of which involve the teaching staff more directly in the operation of the school and by the transfer of the sixth grade to the middle school. This last change is seen as improving conditions for teaching by separating a more mature group from a younger school population. The student body has been empowered by the institution of a Student Council which is able to initiate school activities.

There are concerns about implementing new programs around time and money. However, the faculty also see the need for change and recognizes many proven methods in OBE. Few of the teachers have had experience in the program, but many are familiar with its tenets and feel they have been using them with success.

CASE STUDY REPORT 35

I. Site Description

This school is described as "strong" and "exceptional," especially in the elementary division. There is a sense that the staff knows the children and thus can serve their needs better. Being a small town, some of the faculty expressed a sense of more direct accountability to community and parents. All agreed that "big is not better." The descriptions given of the staff talked of a "caring," "dedicated" staff of "quality," "experienced" people with an average of ten years at the site. The buildings are a combination of the original 1932 structure, 1953 additions, a 1960's addition and the most recent addition done in the 1970's. Each section of the facility reflects the architectural educational design of the period. It is well taken care of, but shows its age. The superintendent indicated that the facility needs attention, and there will either have to be a new one built or extensive renovation of the present buildings.

The school is located in a changing community. Economic change in the farm and small town areas of the state have forced change. Everyone mentioned the problem of declining enrollment and the forced change to a cooperation and combination agreement with other local school districts. Some cooperative ventures were seen as beneficial, of which the local education district was the most frequently mentioned. Open enrollment was said to have had virtually no effect on their school as the logistics of transportation made it undesirable. It may affect some families who live on district border lines. Concern about the future centered on the idea that the school would disappear from the town. That might result in the children being"lost" and "only faces in a crowd." Another bad alternative would be if the school were to stay, but provide inferior programs. The staff does have a sense of what the school means to the community and what it offers.

Unanimously the staff agrees that they all work well together. They report that they are comfortable on social levels as well as professional. "We are co-workers and friends." The faculty expressed a feeling of comfort with having authority to run their classrooms and being trusted by the administration to do so. They are encouraged to be innovative, "to try things." Information flows well so that the faculty knows about professional development opportunities. In-service is reported to be effective, and teachers feel ownership. Money is said to be available for in-service programs, and these are done in cooperation with the education district and the local MEEP team. The board voiced strong support for development efforts.

The administration is said to be willing to listen. Money issues do not dictate decision-making as was reported to have been the case in the past. The principal was complimented as one who "brings out the best in us." An effective decision-making process is in place. Most decisions can be made on the scene, without a necessity to take things to the board. The faculty feel that they were able to participate in decision-making by having their views heard, often through the curriculum committee arrangement. Even a "no" gets an explanation. They also feel that parents and the community have opportunity through committee work to make their views known. All reported satisfaction with the process.

The teacher in the classroom is the leader, but that never appeared to be exercised in an authoritarian, domineering manner. One respondent suggested that teachers "work with the whole child." No child was made to feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, or excluded. Personal attention was common. In the classroom the students could be described as knowing what was expected of them and acting accordingly. The students were described as "good kids," "well

behaved," and there was nothing that contradicted that assessment, although one respondent suggested that the children coming into the school are different now than they were just a few years ago. There are more dysfunctional families due to the economic changes in the rural areas and more troubled children. PER reports generally show that the school is above the state average in most categories, and all respondents agreed that when the children moved on to a higher level they were ready for it--both academically and socially. They also commented on a "low dropout rate," which statistics supported. In the junior high and high school there seemed to be a shift of attitude with an emphasis on rules and punishment more than in elementary.

The documents in the district highlighted the special education programs. In addition, there is a "Merlin" program to encourage critical thinking skills and to accelerate students according to their ability. Everyone agreed that the school is doing a "wonderful job" for those with special needs. However, a number of respondents indicated that they would like to see more parents involved as volunteers for special needs programs. One area taken care of completely by the parents is the chemical dependency awareness program, Project Charlie.

Parents said they feel represented because they have opportunity to be on committees, to do volunteer work and to contact the teachers and staff, or board members whenever they feel it is necessary. In decision-making they feel that their views are represented and heard. They said that they are a part of the school and that they do participate, although they don't always feel as informed as they would like to be. The OBE issue fell in that category. Everyone interviewed agreed that the relationship between the school and the community was "good to excellent." The school is seen as a hub for the life of the community. Those interviewed all expressed a desire to have a school in town and would feel badly if it were to go out via consolidation, but sensed it would not kill the community. The school-community relationship may be tested in the very near future when there is a need for a bond issue. There has not been one for nearly 20 years and it is becoming necessary due to the needs of the facility.

II. Change

One of the few weaknesses mentioned was that the school has becoming "too narrow," "having tunnel vision" due to the lack of new people coming into the program. However, in the past year a new superintendent came into office, and both an elementary and a secondary principal retired. Other retirements will take place within a few years. The coming cooperation and combination agreement will introduce another major change in the school system. That took "tough negotiation," but it is viewed with optimism and everyone seems convinced that it will work. There seems to be an acceptance of change and a willingness to make it work that is necessary. However, change is seen as having the power to be "damn frightening."

The perception of change includes comments like "change is exciting," "it is fun to look ahead to see change." All agreed that acceptance, cooperation and adjustment would follow when change decisions are made. The administration is said to be one that supports change and will encourage what the faculty does in creative teaching. However, it must be seen as the right kind of change. It should not "come from the top down." It should not be "change for change sake," neither "a passing fad" nor "the latest trend."

For change to be successful, there needs to be thorough discussion. People need to feel that they have participated or been heard in the decision-making process. When the opportunity for OBE came about, the people were given the responsibility of responding. When the grant was received, the teachers who

would be involved got what training was offered and began the process. The change was presented through the local newspaper, and an information letter was sent to the parents of the grades that would be affected. Then a parents' meeting was called, and the concept of OBE was explained. It will begin slowly in selected areas. However, many respondents felt that they needed more information and that communication on this issue was not sufficient. The board made it clear that they do not move too fast when making changes. One critical factor is finances. The Cooperation and Combination plan was financed by money from the state legislature. The OBE program came about because grant money was available. One staff member said that change depends on the legislature's willingness to finance it.

The only transformational issue considered was OBE. When discussing OBE, people appeared to feel that they were already doing it. "OBE is what good teachers already do; it is simply good instruction." Teachers said that they had no fear of OBE, yet there is a resistance since they feel they are already doing much of what it calls for. Presently the enthusiasm of those who are working on it has been infectious and others have been positively influenced. Concerns expressed presently are:

- The ones working on it are overworked, overloaded.
- There is not a big enough support staff.
- It requires more training than what they feel they presently have.
- It takes a lot of time.
- It will require positive attitudes.
- Is there a commitment to it and the new equipment (computers) that will be needed?
- Will the money continue to be there?

CASE STUDY REPORT 36

I. Site Description

A two-story, red brick building, this school serves a population of 91 K-6 students. Until last year, the building also housed the community's secondary school program, but secondary students now attend schools in nearby towns via a process called "tuitioning." The school serves a small, largely middle class, community in greater Minnesota. Most community residents are employed as farmers, small business operators, and professionals, and parental support for the school's activities appears to be strong. A number of respondents noted that parental participation at conferences, school programs, and other school-sponsored events is high. The school's PER report indicates that students "performed at or significantly above the statewide norms."

One teacher noted that this cultural emphasis on active involvement and participation is shared by the school's student body: "Because of the smallness of our school, everyone must participate." There is uniform agreement among those interviewed that discipline problems are minimal at the school and that this can be attributed largely to the kinds of families living in the community. "Our discipline problems are almost negligible. . . There are high quality, stable families who have a long history within this community." As another person put it: "There is a real sense of family here; few social problems; few single parent families; the school and the families here share the same goals. . . Students have an appreciation for property; they have respect for authority."

Observations of daily life in the school confirmed that students do indeed appear to be "tuned in" to adult expectations for good behavior. Collectively, the students appeared to be enthusiastic and self-directed while taking part in classroom activities. The drawings of the students were nearly always positive, consistent with the perceptions of many of the adults who work in the school that it is seen as a "good place for children."

The school's staff members are encouraged to take part in staff development opportunities. Staff members have recently participated in activities on the use of math manipulatives, computers in the classroom, the elements of instruction (Hunter style), and have also attended math and science workshops. The principal believes the school's faculty members are already quite knowledgeable about changes taking place within the teaching profession. The faculty also have a good working relationship with one another.

Two themes emerged in interviews. First, the school has been and continues to be perceived as an effective educational institution. "This place is not secure for teachers, but it is secure for kids. . .Our kids want be here. . . Big is not better. We hear horror stories about [a larger town's school]--the detention, discipline problems." Second, the issue of sheer survival remains a key concern for the school's "stakeholders." Thus, when asked to describe what they would like to see happen at this school in the future, several individuals made comments like this: "I just hope we are here. It would be good to have certain specialists, but you can't think about adding and adding to your program all of the time." "I would least like to see it go under. I'd envision that if our finances stay all right, we could become a completely outcome based school within five years."

A number of individuals noted that "losing" the secondary school was traumatic for both staff members and members of the community at large. A member of the school board expressed the hope that members of the board would "soon be able to focus energy on other matters. I feel we have to progress. If we are

truly interested in the best education for children, we will pursue it [OBE]. I think we need to look at the potential of computers. . ."

II. Change

One individual summarized the school's view of change: "OBE is not something being chased by other districts. But for us, this is reality. The reality is that we have to change to survive." A central concern faced by the community over the years has been that of finding ways to support and maintain local schools. The school board appears to have a history of dealing with fiscal challenges "assertively and pro-actively." The school's principal confirmed that the school board is a "strong" one. "They do their homework. They have a good sense of financial matters. They knew that we had better do this now, or we would lose the elementary." As one person put it, "As a taxpayer living in the community, I would lobby hard to have a combined system again--with 28 students per room--rather than see this school closed."

During the summer of 1989, teachers developed learner outcome statements for the science curriculum in collaboration with teachers from two other elementary schools and the secondary school. The school plans to implement OBE in grades three and four next year, and an informational meeting for parents was held in May of this year. The principal believes that, if adequate resources are available, the transition to outcome based education will take place within the next five years, feeling that the readiness with which staff and parents have accepted other educational innovation bodes well for the future of OBE. The principal summarized it this way: "The teachers will develop individual learning plans. . . Our kindergarten and first grade have individualized plans already. Third and fourth grade will be next."

While some faculty members are quite familiar with outcome based education, others are waiting for more information. Teachers commented on the status of OBE in the faculty. "I would say right now there are only a few teachers who know very much about OBE. For the most part, I think the rest of the faculty is waiting to see how things go." "I may have been a little resistant in the beginning, but that's because I didn't understand what was going on. . . I think there are still a few teachers who have questions about how to implement it [and] where the time and money are going to come from. Where clerical time will come from." One of the teachers interviewed admitted to being "a little skeptical" about OBE and to not knowing much about it. He believes the driving force behind the OBE movement is "accountability." "All teachers try to be accountable, they try to document. There are some kids who will never be able to divide fractions. . .what about the ones who can't pick up certain things even after three, four, five, six years?. . .There is going to be an impact on me as a teacher. I don't think it's fair." Another teacher who was involved in OBE commented: "I basically feel that all good teachers have always had outcomes in mind. . . My report cards are now more outcome based. I see it as something exciting."

CASE STUDY REPORT 37

I. Site Description

Located in a newer building in a "very rural" area, this school also serves as a community center for social events such as wedding showers and anniversary parties. People use the gym for regular volleyball games and Community Education holds Early Childhood Parenting classes there. The community is conservative, traditional--and changing. Less than half of the area farm families are solely engaged in farming, with many farm couples also employed off the farm. "Lots of parents work and cannot volunteer, but we have no trouble getting help with field trips. They help with things after school, and when the need exists." "In most cases they are intact families, happy families, working families, struggling families, educationally supportive families. They want children to get ahead and they see the school as a street of success." However, the combination of farming and off-farm employment is blamed for a low degree of "parent support, and low attendance at PTA," observed by one teacher. "There is more authority given to the school."

There are 69 children in the school, in kindergarten through fifth grade, with the second and third grades combined in one classroom and the fourth and fifth grades in another. These children are taught by a staff of four teachers, with learning disabilities and Chapter I specialists and other support staff available. The principal is administrator of this school and another similar rural school. In addition to the teaching staff, the school has a full time secretary, two food service people, and one person employed for plant maintenance.

The school sits on the edge of a small town, permitting activities not usually found in other schools, such as the annual rocket firing in the school playground. The fourth-fifth grade teacher has the students build rockets, an activity which is considered to illustrate many of the concepts taught at that level: "adjectives, colors, variables, nouns." The rocket kits are purchased by the students with help, if necessary, from the PTA. The size of the school presents advantages and disadvantages to the staff and pupils. The small kindergarten and first grade classes permit more "one on one" attention. "With this ratio of students to staff, they can really meet the special needs." Teachers report that they become better acquainted with each student and his or her problems. This is especially important in the case of children with handicaps. These small classes also require that grades be combined. One teacher had a split class the year before and described it as "overwhelming" and "difficult." "You feel you can give them only half your time. Start one class, get first graders started, work on their reading, then give them something to do and go over to second grade. You couldn't follow through. The plus was that I had high achievers; they were able to survive." A disadvantage noted by one teacher is that when the specialists--Chapter I reading teachers and LD teachers--pull a student out of class to work with them, it puts additional strain on a student who is getting "only half" of a teacher's time. When students are taken out of class, one teacher asked, "Do they miss as much as they gain?"

The principal divides time between this and another country school of similar size. This leaves the staff greater autonomy than is found in many other schools, and they "enjoy that." The remaining staff form a "Faculty School Improvement Council, where all share in the decision-making. The principal is willing to listen to others and to ask for opinions. The secretary, teachers, principal--all share."

The students at the school are described as "not worldly," "a delightful group of children, not as exposed as in town. They are enthusiastic, fired up, not as jaded, eager to learn, very loving and supportive. There is a special feeling that they have for each other." Some of this enthusiasm was displayed in the drawings made by these students showing why they like school. The pupils drew scenes in the classroom and the playground: of

themselves working at their desks and joining in team games. A frequent theme was "being with friends." Where teachers were included in the pictures, they were portrayed as supportive leaders, helping and congratulating the student. By third grade, as in most schools, there was an occasional "school is boring." Most of the children are accustomed to going home to farm chores after school, and they are likely to offer to help with chores at school. The children are seen as "average" academically, but "socially sheltered. They do not travel a lot." One teacher also notes that there is "little emphasis on school at home."

II. Change

To some extent this school is insulated from social problems found in many city schools. The teachers interviewed did not discuss problems of single parent families, chemical abuse, or students dropping out. This is partially due to the age level of the student body, but also indicated stability in the community and in individual families. The most dramatic change anticipated is that the school will close due to low enrollment. In that event, the intention is to "be part of the process of helping families ease children into city schools." There is also concern for the community, which has been accustomed to using the school for community events. "I would hate to see the district cease to use the building for community education."

These teachers are all acquainted to some degree with OBE teaching concepts, through contact with other teachers and through attending lectures. For the most part, they liken it to the practices now in place. "If a student does not pass the test, go back. In kindergarten we've always done that." Several teachers had attended seminars on OBE. One noted that they were "very theoretical, not how to use it in the classroom." Another described the OBE process as "the idea that you teach the best you can, monitoring the concept, then you test that concept. Those that pass go on to something else--enrichment. Those who do not pass go to some more teaching, and then a test to see if they did learn it. If they did, they go on; if not, they are retaught and retested." This teacher was bothered, however, by the "idea of retesting with a different test. I don't have any new material that covers the same concepts but uses different questions. I retest, but I use the same test." The concept of retesting is one feature which attracts some teachers to OBE. According to one teacher, "If you're not making mistakes, you're not doing anything; it is important that the student feels success."

The problems of size are expected to affect implementation of OBE at this school, as teachers already feel isolated, having contact with other grade level teachers only at monthly meetings. This will affect their ability to rewrite curriculum, to integrate with other schools, and to design enrichment and supplemental materials without allowance for time away from the classroom. Unless time can be found outside the school day, the teacher's absence would further limit the time available for each student. Teachers said that they "would like to see agreed-upon objectives of what children should learn," but also said that they "don't like that in some ways, because minimums become maximums." They would like to see "students who are eager to learn. Somewhere along the line students are turned off; we never see that in kindergarten." They also expressed a desire to see students become "more well rounded, confident enough in themselves to overcome fear of failure." An ideal school would be "without grade distinctions and allow children to succeed at their own rate of success. We have too many pencil and paper activities--not enough hands-on experience. Learning is an integrative process; you do nothing in isolation. Parents should participate in goal setting. . . No longer can we say that's the duty of the home."

The people in this community have built up traditions which include activities at the school. The PTA has a fund raiser in February, when people come into the schools on four Saturday nights to play cards, "and for those four Saturday nights the money is turned over to the school." Agricultural traditions are seen also in the planning of meetings which always end with a "lunch" of sandwiches and bars. Because of the daily schedule of

the farm, meals are served differently, with the larger meal at midday and a lighter meal served later after chores are finished. The faculty at the school emphasizes these characteristics of the local culture, to preserve it as much as possible.

The size of the school both enhances and inhibits the ability to make changes. There is good communication within the school and an easygoing relationship between the teachers and the administration. The inhibitions are, as discussed above, the inability to work with other teachers at grade level and a feeling of isolation. There is also one instance of personality conflict, which can be magnified in a staff of this size. The combined classroom has its drawbacks. "I would definitely recommend single grades. There are not enough advantages to combined grades. Small schools are fine, but if it takes a combined grade, it's not worth it."

Achieving the goals of an integrated system, multiple bases for assessment, and student groupings to support personal needs and learning will be difficult. Elimination of disparities is possible within the distinct cultural parameters, but learners are limited in their interaction with the wider community. Even at the secondary level, these students will have trouble with integration, as participation in extracurricular activities is harder for out-of-town students, mainly because of transportation problems and chores on the farm. At the same time, it is felt that in the case of integration in middle school, "kids who have a hard time might have had a hard time anywhere." The small classes permit individual attention and compel collaboration among students on a level not possible in larger schools, but it comes at a price of limited access to interaction. A new approach to teaching will have to be combined with a degree of certainty as to how long, and in what manner, this school will be allowed to continue.

These teachers are concerned about the prospect of closing the school. While there are problems with small schools--split classes and limits on the faculty--there is also a recognition that "bigger" is not necessarily "better." Several people commented on the low status of education. "National leaders have to appreciate school for this society. OBE is not going to do a thing unless children are put first. This is the first generation of Americans not willing to sacrifice for their kids."

CASE STUDY REPORT 38

I. Site Description

This school is the only elementary school serving a greater Minnesota school district characterized by its location in the heart of an American Indian reservation within the scenic beauty of a national forest. The community is physically isolated, and the school must operate within the constraints of a community that is historically divided along racial lines. The student population is roughly 70% Native American and 30% white. Representing the diverse groups in the community, the schools offer much of the social life for children and, in the words of one individual, feel the pressures of the community--"always enmeshed in controversy." The former superintendent was female, as are the principals of the two schools as well as another district administrator. The board is mostly male, and this, for some, has created a sense of conflict. Community members see the new superintendent as having quite a challenge as board members evidence differing philosophies for the schools.

Some members of the school staff report that morale is low. In their opinion, the previous superintendent, now gone from the area, initiated OBE with little or no input from the teachers or the community. It was passed to the principal who wrote the OEL grant in the summer. Teachers feel left out of the decision-making process and see the new administration as top down. They do, however, feel that their building principal considers their needs and that less important decisions are still in their hands. Another reason given for the low morale is a certain divisiveness between staff who blame everything on racism and staff who try to suppress the fact that racism exists. The main complaints from school staff concern dealing with children and their parents on matters of discipline, i.e., physical fighting, absenteeism, and transience. There is a sense among some that Indian parents do not trust white teachers, making parental involvement a much desired, but hard to establish activity.

In spite of the low morale, a friendly, close feeling exists among the staff. This is maintained because of a tacit agreement not to discuss their differences, but to "get on" with educating the children. Staff members acknowledge that children come to school needing nurturing and the skills for learning. They try to provide this, and their dedication is realized in the words of one community member: "They work their hearts out and are burnt out." Staff members express concern for early identification of both gifted and special needs students so that they may be better served. Some staff members recognize that Indian children do not respond to authoritarian methods and would like greater knowledge as to how to teach them. They see "tremendous lost potential" in such children.

II. Change

Perhaps the greatest initiative for change in the community and especially this school comes from the belief that in spite of much hard work and dedication, the needs of the children are not being met. This acknowledgement of the need for change is a strong catalyst in support of OBE. Cited often by teachers is the "cycle of failure." They note that children come to school in kindergarten with some enthusiasm, but that by second grade are already becoming disenfranchised. Staff feel that "survival issues" for many of these children take precedence over learning. There is also a perceived climate of negative peer pressure that begins in the elementary school and is manifested in an anti-intellectual bias and a bias against self-improvement. Staff see motivation as a serious problem and look to OBE to change this by breaking the cycle of failure. Staff also recognize the need for parental involvement and see OBE as a way to get parents to support their children's

education. They hope OBE can provide methods for meeting the language deficiencies some students evidence when they enter school.

At the same time, barriers to realizing the potential of OBE exist. Many staff members feel that a definition of OBE is needed--that only the principal and leadership team really understand what it is. Also expressed is the need for time to implement the curricular changes. They lament the lack of money for social services support to get the children beyond the survival level so they can learn. Cited often was the need for a full-time psychologist, a social worker, and a counselor.

Another barrier is clearly the lack of facilities. Overcrowding, large class size, and the lack of space were mentioned by both staff and parents. In addition to these physical constraints, absenteeism may hamper progress for students and thus the potential of OBE for breaking the failure cycle. Further, the new superintendent, the school board, and some adults are seen as potential barriers to change. Opinions are divided about the new superintendent. Some in the school believe that the schisms occurred before him and that he will have a difficult job reuniting the school community. On the other hand, some see him as responsible for the divisions in the staff, claiming that he sides with the board chair. Another belief is that a group of white, powerful adults "work behind the scenes to prevent change for Indian groups." Whatever the truth, clearly, the factions of the district must be united to effect longlasting substantive change.

A final barrier is the attitude of some who see the Indian culture as "dys-functional." Contrasted with this are Native Americans who fear the school and feel helpless about their children's education. These people do not participate in the voting process, decision-making, or in setting educational goals for their children. Here, too, an effort is needed to break down the barriers to involvement. A final problem noted by Indian leaders is that some white teachers use shame to discipline the children, and they argue that this is harmful because in the Indian culture shame is viewed as a great loss of face.

Staff development is the primary approach to change evidenced in the school. Workshops that move from the general to specific have been presented and tied to building goals. Surveys and these goals determined the content of the workshops so an effort is being made to accommodate staff interests and needs. The staff sees OBE as an opportunity to work more as professionals. They like the options for individual decision-making and project a hope that OBE can bring greater parental involvement. At the same time they recognize that the OBE implementation is "not very far along."

One article on OBE was written in the newspaper so the community has had some minimal exposure to the changes imminent in their school. There is greater optimism in general, however, in the community with the new clinic and wood processing company. Enrollment is increasing, and the Indian tribe is offering more support for the public school by providing for the children's physical needs (e.g., clothing and being "cleaner"). One recognized need for the school and district is that of more cooperation between the community and school. Cited often as a vision for the future were "children motivated to learn." Many want to "put the Indian issue aside" and "get rid of racism"; education should consider the whole child--Indian and non-Indian alike. Recognized throughout the community and school is one effort needed first, that of meeting the survival needs of the children. Clearly the OBE transformation, if it is to occur, will be grounded in this appeal.

CASE STUDY REPORT 39

I. Site Description

First offered in 1989, this special pre-kindergarten program was designed for children in an urban district who miss the September 1 cut-off date for entrance to kindergarten, i.e., whose birthdays fall between September 2 and December 31. By mid-March 1990, it had an enrollment of 253 students (116 boys, 139 girls) at three sites where students participated in half day sessions five days a week. One site is unique in that it receives funding from and is accountable to two agencies. Each session of roughly twenty-three students is staffed by one district teacher and one paraprofessional, with the same access to services as other students.

The communities that the program serves are diverse culturally, economically, socially, and racially. The racial composition of the students is as follows: 100 white students; and 155 children of color (African Americans, 113; Asian Americans, 23; American Indians, 11; and Hispanic Americans, 8). In the opinion of one educator, the children can all be labelled "at risk": "To be an urban kid in society today requires that society consider such a child 'at risk.'" Sixty-six per cent of the total program population tested as eligible for Chapter I according to the results of the Kindergarten Entry Level Test, and teachers report that many of the children do not receive breakfast before they come to school in the morning.

At two of the three sites, there appears to be an equitable balance of white and non-white children. The remaining site serves a disproportionate number of children of color: One class contains no white children; and the percentages of children of color in the other three classes are 70%, 80%, and 85%. Twenty-one of the 23 Asian American children are enrolled at this site, and the parents of these children all meet poverty guidelines, meaning they live on an income of less than $6,000 a year. A large proportion (about 70%) of children at another site also come from families who are recipients of AFDC, and over 50% of these are single parent families.

Based in large part on the High/Scope curriculum, the purpose of the program is to assist "at risk" children to reach their developmental potential in order to "move to the kindergarten level." There are several key concepts:

-The first is that "play is children's work." Each day every child prepares a plan for his or her "work" to be accomplished during structured playtime that incorporates concrete learning materials and "make believe play" as well as sensory and creative arts materials. A regular schedule of participation for the children includes large group time, individual planning, "work," and an activity called "recall." Teachers move around freely as children "work at playing." Classroom observations at all sites showed the rooms full of posters, children's art work, blocks, toys, art supplies, science experiments (seeds growing), musical instruments, tape players, and other manipulatives. The rooms were also divided to signify the "pretending corners" where playing store and house occur, a quiet area for reading books and rocking in the chair, a water or sand table, and an art and discovery area. All activities and learning resources were kept at "kid level" for easy access. One teacher was quoted as saying, "This is the kids' room."

-A second concept is that the program should be individualized. Teachers keep records of each child's ability to plan activities and his or her educational development. There is special emphasis on recording "anecdotal notes and selected child's behavior" related to key experiences and social/emotional development.

-The third concept is that the program should focus on the "whole child," including health, nutrition, and self concept. At one site, about a third of the children participate in the breakfast program as a regular part of their day. Program philosophy emphasizes the "quality of life" for potentially disenfranchised four year olds by taking an active approach to their learning with adult support and guidance. "Good job, sweety,"

"Fantastic," and respectful "Thank you's" were often heard during classroom observations. Another support comes from an environment for cooperation and shared leadership.

-A fourth concept is that parents should be valued and encouraged as equal and active partners in their child's education. This component of the program was not as well developed in the program's first year. The parents are currently involved in parent conferences, but the guidance and community components of this concept are still in the developmental stage. The parent steering committee had its first meeting late in the spring.

The program's educational component focuses on the development of language skills, motor skills, and social/emotional affect. Social/ emotional development should include fair consideration towards racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic background and gender. Classroom observation suggested that children mixed well according to race and sex; most seemed to play in racially mixed groups.

In the opinion of the teachers in this program, the demands made upon urban teachers are "different from those that are made upon them in a suburban setting," stemming from differences in the culture of the schools. In suburban schools the teacher relies "on the parents to call and provide information about the child"; in urban schools the teacher must rely on his/her observation skills. Teachers find if necessary to rely "on the bus drivers to provide helpful information about how the child is feeling on that day, by the way the child approaches the bus." The teacher must be able to "put all of those bits of information together like a puzzle to get a profile of how the child is feeling that day."

Teachers feel that the "stereotype of the American family is no longer true," and the experience of children today is "not what existed a generation ago." The job of teacher in this program requires that "you learn to make allowances." The teacher has to be keenly aware and "much more attuned to kids" in the classroom because almost all of the information that the teacher receives about the child's needs comes from the child. Teachers use questioning techniques to discover how a given child is feeling, then use this information to guide the day's activity for the child. "Urban kids need to learn survival skills" and know they are "all right as who they are." Noting that the "expert knowledge" to deal with "high risk kids" was absent in their training, the teachers to a large degree must "draw on personal experience."

The program's decision-making process differs at the sites. Within the program, the teachers report a "good relationship," with everyone participating in giving direction to and improving the program. At two sites, decisions are made as a team that includes all levels of district and building site management. Parents are the only group currently not represented on the team. There is a general consensus that the teams of teachers, principals and administrators work well together. The third site is different because of its dual funding which means that decisions are made by both agencies. Some respondents identified a "power struggle" between these agencies and the desire for "more collaboration with the district."

II. Change

Because the program is in its inaugural year, the notion of change is not applicable. Teachers in the program reportedly enjoy not having to impose an "academic component" on students whom they know are not ready for such work because of developmental, academic and emotional deficiencies in their backgrounds. They report feeling more "emotionally in tune" with their students, which is new to them; before they had been "too preoccupied and too busy with making sure that the 'academic' part was being taught." Teachers are also pleased that the children are learning "without the tensions of having to make them learn because it is a requirement of the school system." Rewards come to the teachers in seeing the thinking skills their students acquire being "applied experientially

in learning/living situations." Teachers see this as "creating a healthy attitude to learning that will be lifelong."

Because the OEL proposal was finalized in August and the program implemented in September, the staff had little time to prepare. This hurried implementation forced building principals and other staff to exert more effort on this program, rather than other aspects of the new school year, causing "rocky relations" at first with the schools. Teachers were troubled about where to place their loyalties, but now "communication has cleared," and there seems to be an excellent working relation with all sites' teachers. "They all seem to be part of the same family." At one site, the program was looked at positively as a place for other students in the building to go "when they need time out from a situation." "Being around these little children lets us all see the child we once were, and that really gives you different perspective."

As the program approaches its second year, staff raised a number of concerns for the future. Three of these relate to the fact that this is a small program operating within a major urban school system. First, teachers feel that the goals of the program need to be "refined" in light of district needs for early childhood education and the evolving requirements of the OEL grant. Because of changing social needs, the district must "investigate this aspect of education and how it fits into the educational process." The potential overtesting of children was one specific issue mentioned. Second, there is a feeling on the teachers' part that as "part of a giant system," it is difficult to coordinate their program. Because of the district funding formula, many consider the program to be a kindergarten instead of a pre-school, which led to a misunderstanding with some parents and the larger education community. In the staff's opinion, the district is "not aware of what the program is," and teachers perceive that the district "does not know or even care what it is doing." For the teachers in the program, collaboration with non-program teachers has been "difficult," and, because funding comes from diverse sources, relationships with the teacher union were reportedly "tense" during the first year.

Third, teachers are clearly worried about the transition their students will have to make as they go into "regular" kindergarten. This concern focuses on the difference between a developmental program and a "structured, performance based program" as found in the regular classroom. The validity of this concern is evident as it was observed that the children openly discussed their concern about their new school for next year and "who else is going to go to the same school." One solution as the program grows is for additional facilities that would also house primary grades programs that incorporate process education into the curriculum. Another is that the district provide training to other teaching staff in the district that would help them to better understand the process of development upon which the program is based.

A fourth concern relates to parental involvement for both potential and participating parents. As mentioned before, as yet there seems to be little parental involvement beyond student conferences. Finally, teachers suggested that the district needs to "train people to work together as teams" and to "work through methods of making decisions jointly." More time should be allocated for staff development for all support and development activities. Both of these are necessary as the district moves towards its goal of site-based management.

GLOSSARY

Area Learning Centers (ALC's)- Special state-funded alternative programs for students who have dropped out of school and want to complete high school away from a traditional school setting

Assurance of Mastery (AOM or AoM)- A state program to insure the mastery of certain essential outcomes

Cooperation and Combination (CC)- A state program that provides funding for districts in greater Minnesota to work cooperatively

Educational Cooperative Service Unit (ECSU)- One of nine regional units that provides staff development and related services to area districts

Education Districts- Collaborative units of smaller districts in greater Minnesota

IEP- Individual Education Plan, a term used in special education to describe plans for achieving specific student outcomes

Outcome Based Education (OBE)- In the words of William Spady, a way of "defining, designing, developing, delivering, and documenting instruction in terms of its intended goals and outcomes"; this approach to education forms part of the agenda for the Office of Educational Leadership, and the ten R&D grants were originally written to implement this approach.

Office of Educational Leadership (OEL)- An office in the Minnesota State Department of Education created by legislative mandate in July, 1989 to "create a foundation from which the education system in Minnesota could be transformed to better meet the needs of students and society into the 21st century."

MEEP- The Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program, a State Department of Education sponsored change process based on the effective schools literature and other research on school change

Pairing and Sharing (PS)- A state program that provides funding for districts in Greater Minnesota to work cooperatively (PS predates CC)

PER- Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting, a mandated process through which Minnesota school districts demonstrate accountability

SBM- School or Site Based Management, one of a number of approaches in which a group of people collectively make decisions about a school site